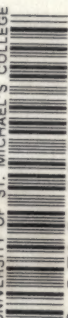


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THE SON OF MAN

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THE SON OF MAN

HIS PREPARATION, HIS LIFE,
HIS WORK

BY THE
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(CUM PERMISSU SUPERIORUM)

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PART I
HIS PREPARATION



THE SON OF MAN

CHAPTER I

THE FALL OF THE HUMAN RACE

I.—MAN BEFORE HIS FALL.

IF we consult the poets, the philosophers, and historians of all the nations of the world, we find everywhere, and without exception, "The Golden Age" at the origin of things: "*Aurea prima sata est ætas*" (Ovid, "*Metamorph.*" lib. i.). The Golden Age is always represented as a period of innocence and happiness, characterized by the absence of all evil and the presence of all good. No sickness, no sorrow, no cruel separations, no anxiety, no trouble of any kind. The earth yielded of itself its treasures and riches, its flowers and fruits. Virtue was easy, and vice was unknown. Man was the King of creation, and all nature was subject to him—the fowls of the air, the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the sea.

What is the origin of these old legends which agree so well with our Christian faith? Whence comes this universal belief in a Golden Age, if not from the

primitive tradition which is recorded in our Sacred Books? When God created the world He simply said, "Let it be," and it was made. At the mere sound of the Divine voice, millions of worlds leaped forth from nothing, and peopled the immensity of space. But when He created man, he seemed to consult with Himself as if He had in view some grand, godlike purpose, truly worthy of His infinite magnificence, and He said: "Let Us make man to Our own image and likeness." And man, the favourite of God, the brother of the Angels, the compendium of creation, the link between the visible and the invisible worlds, was brought into being. How great and beautiful he was! What grace, what majesty, what nobility, what perfection of body and soul! His intelligence was ablaze with light. The least of his thoughts was vaster than the whole universe. He understood the laws of creation, the secrets of nature, the properties of beings, the revolutions of the celestial bodies, the choirs and hierarchies of Angels. He knew the Creator—His immensity, His eternity, His infinite goodness—and he loved Him with all the vehemence of his great heart. The genius of Solomon was profound darkness compared with the transcending brightness of Adam's intelligence, the sublimity and compass of his knowledge. Head of the race, he was destined to be the teacher and doctor of mankind. If he remained faithful, the treasures of his wisdom and learning would pass on to his posterity. If he did not persevere, even the scraps and wrecks of his knowledge would still survive in the traditions of nations, and, like a distant and vacillating light,

would shine in the midst of the darkness of time. His will was not less perfect than his intelligence. It had a natural inclination for all that is heroic, grand, noble, pure, and good, and a supreme aversion for all that is evil. His imagination was filled with the highest ideals and the purest images. God Himself appeared to him in the earthly paradise under some mysterious form, and familiarly conversed with him as with a beloved child, revealing to him the mysteries of His Divine life. And what a beautiful place that Terrestrial Paradise was! There everything delighted his eyes and enchanted his ears. The very animals were irresistibly attracted towards him, fascinated by the sweetness of his voice and the spell of his personality. A most perfect health, too, glowed in his body, and the freshness of youth was to be perpetual. After a few years of happiness on earth, he was to be transferred to the vision of God, without knowing the agony of death, or the horrors and humiliations of the grave. Happy Adam, if he had not forgotten his greatness, and thrown away his crown!

II.—THE ENEMY OF THE HUMAN RACE.

The history of the world shows in the light of the most absolute evidence the existence and baneful influence of evil spirits. St. Paul, summing up the universal belief, exclaims: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Ephes. vi. 12). The Angels were created in a state of great perfection, happiness, and

beauty, yet their eternal felicity was to be the reward of their constancy, and therefore they had their time of trial before receiving their crowns. This trial was of short duration ; there was no hesitation, no delay, no procrastination, in their resolves. The light of their intelligence was so bright and so powerful that they saw at a glance all the reasons that could influence their judgments ; hence their decisions were prompt, final, and irrevocable. God Who created them claimed the homage of their liberty. Lucifer, one of the brightest of these glorious spirits, refused to obey, and raised the standard of revolt. “ And there was a great battle in Heaven ; Michael and his Angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his Angels ; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in Heaven ” (Apoc. xii. 7). In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, they were hurled down into the abyss of hell. “ I saw Satan like lightning falling from Heaven ” (Luke x. 18). “ How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer ? ” (Isa. xiv. 12). “ Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Thou wast in the pleasures of the Paradise of God : every precious stone was thy covering. Thou wast perfect in thy ways until iniquity was found in thee ” (Ezech. xxviii. 12-15). The proud race is now fallen. These rebellious spirits shall have to bear for ever the weight of eternal justice. What a change in their nature ! Their whole being is depraved and perverted. They have no thought now but for evil, no aspiration but for crime. Cursed by God and crushed by His mighty hand,

they plunge from abyss to abyss. Their inflexible will is fixed in sin for ever, and with such firmness of purpose, such energy of determination, that they are incapable of regret. If God should stretch forth His hand towards them and offer His grace, they would spurn and reject it with contempt. All their energies and powers, all their aspirations and cravings, are now concentrated upon one great object, one infernal resolve: Vengeance! For them, indeed, revenge is sweet! Revenge against God Whom they blaspheme; revenge against the faithful Angels whose designs they shall ever thwart and oppose; revenge against nature whose elements they disturb by commotions and storms; revenge especially against man, the last-born of the household of God, man destined to occupy one day in Heaven the thrones forfeited by their apostasy!

III.—THE TEMPTATION AND THE FALL.

According to the Modernist Theory on the Temptation and the Fall, the narrative of Genesis is all allegorical. It is a fable representing the awakening of reason to moral responsibility, and the triumph of passion over duty. This opinion is not only inadmissible, it is absurd. Any conscientious reader of the Bible will see at a glance that the inspired writer wishes to give us information concerning a very remarkable event in the life of Adam and Eve, an event fraught with terrible consequences for our first parents and their posterity. Some Catholics are inclined to believe that the narrative is partly historical and partly allegorical. It is historical, inasmuch as it contains the relation of the trans-

gression of a Divine precept at the suggestion of the evil spirit. It is allegorical, inasmuch as this relation is veiled under the allegory of the forbidden fruit. The crude narrative of the Fall might have scandalized weak and simple souls. Hence the Holy Ghost thought fit to conceal it under a symbol. Besides, they think that God's walking in the Garden and the conversing of the serpent with Eve can only be symbolical. We have not the same scruples as these learned critics, and we sincerely believe that the narrative of the Fall is purely historical. If the Holy Ghost manifested Himself under the form of a dove, as we read in the New Testament, or under the appearance of tongues of fire, we do not see why God should not appear under the form of a man. As for the temptation of Eve by the serpent, it is not half so mysterious as the temptation of Our Lord by Satan. What strikes us most in the temptation of our first parents is the craft and deceit of the tempter. First of all, he does not address himself to the man, but to the woman. Weak and timid by nature, less firm and strong, more inclined to vanity and pride, the woman is more likely to yield consent to his suggestions. Then, again, he hides his perverseness under the cloak of innocence, and he insinuates himself by slow, gentle, and seemingly harmless ways. He does not incite directly to sin ; he knows such a course would create horror and disgust, and would eventually defeat his plans. We have all met a traitor, a serpent in human form in our private or public life. He is the incarnation of deceit and lies. Everything in him is false : his eyes, his countenance,

his voice, his gestures ; he bites or caresses according as it suits his purpose.

The serpent said to the woman, with a kind of unconcerned indifference : " Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree of Paradise ?" (Gen. iii. 1). Why ? He simply asks a question which seems natural and inoffensive. Eve ingenuously and artlessly states her case, and mentions the Divine prohibition : " Of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of Paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat . . . lest perhaps we die " (Gen. iii. 3). This " perhaps " does not imply that she doubts the word of God. No ; so far her soul is fresh, innocent, and pure, and she believes, but it reveals a kind of uncertainty as to the meaning of death. The Devil saw at once that the moment had come for him to strike, and therefore he boldly falsifies the Divine interdict : " Not at all (*nequaquam*)," he said ; " you shall not die the death " (*id.*, 4). We all know the effect of a bold, firm, resolute assertion on a soul that is pure and candid, sincere and unsuspecting ; on a virginal soul that has never been deceived, and does not as yet suspect duplicity or guile. The Devil did not wait for an answer, nor did he allow his victim a moment's reflection. He saw that the moment was decisive, and therefore he continued : " God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (*id.*, 5). Now he waits ! . . . Ah ! he knows the power of flattery and pride. His monstrous fallacy, " You shall be as gods," is like a two-edged sword penetrating the

very heart of the unfortunate mother of our race. Her virtue is now agonizing. She is on the verge of the abyss. One moment more, and her beautiful soul will be dead to the life of grace !

At the words of the serpent, Eve opens her soul to pride. She looks at the tree ; it was " fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold " (*id.*, 6). She takes of the fruit and eats. Then she pauses and reflects. There is no visible change in her ; death has not come. She looks around : the earth does not open under her feet, the sun shines as before, the birds continue to sing, and the flowers still display their most brilliant colours, and exhale their most delicious perfume. She presents the fruit to Adam, who eats it. Our ruin is now sealed ; all is now consummated ! The serpent may retire ; he has won a victory which will have appalling consequences in time and in eternity ! We see from this that the fall of Adam was entirely the work of Eve. The devil knew well that if he succeeded in leading the woman astray, he could easily encompass the ruin of the man. In fact, the deceiver does not appear at all in the temptation of Adam ; he leaves this work of iniquity to Eve. Hence the Scripture says : " From the woman came the beginning of sin, and by her we all die " (*Ecclus.* xxv. 33).

IV.—CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL.

Let us now consider the consequences of the Fall, not only for our first parents, but also for the whole human race. No sooner had Adam and Eve transgressed the Divine command than they lost all their privileges. Their soul, so beautiful a few moments

before, is now defiled. They have lost the mantle of grace, and ceased to be the children of God. Their mind is given up to ignorance and doubt ; their will is the sport of a thousand passions, and a prey to remorse and despair. In the sweat of their brow they shall eat their bread till they return to the earth out of which they were taken : for dust they are, and into dust they shall return. They are so young, so full of life, of happiness, and of hope, and yet they must die ! They must die ! What does that mean ? They see clouds gathering in the sky, and from the clouds lightnings shoot forth in sudden vivid flashes, and then they hear the thunder pealing and roaring above their heads, with a frightful noise. Perhaps a little bird struck by lightning drops dead at their feet. They look at the little creature which but a few moments before was singing its song of gladness ; it is now disfigured and lifeless. Is that death ? From the solitary grotto where they have taken shelter they see the dried-up leaves carried away by the wind, and the beautiful flowers losing their colours and perfume, drooping their heads and withering away. Is that death ? They hear the roar of the lion and the cry of his victim, and behold the bleeding carcass of the strangled lamb, and they ask themselves : Is that death ? But when a few years later Cain murders his brother Abel, then, indeed, they realize what death is !

In order to understand the consequences of the primitive Fall for the whole human race, we must never lose sight of the fact that Adam had been appointed by God the head of all his posterity. His

destiny and that of his children were bound up in such a way that his will for good or evil was to be the will of the race. Such as he was we were to be. Eve was not the head of the human family. If Eve alone had transgressed, we should have suffered no loss ; but if Adam alone had sinned, we should even then have fallen with him in a common ruin. This strange solidarity may surprise us, but we cannot say that it is unjust. We have but to look around us, and consider the law of heredity, such as it works amongst men. Is it not a fact that the child inherits the good or bad qualities of his parents, their features, their character, their temperament, their intellectual dispositions, their passions, their good or bad name, their respectability, or their shame ? And yet whoever thinks of accusing the justice, the wisdom, and the goodness of God ? This solidarity between child and parent is absolute, and too often terrible. Noble, respected, rich, the father imparts his privileges, his honour, his wealth, to his child. Infamous, degraded, castaway, dishonoured and disgraced, the child has to bear the shame of his parent. Our reason does not revolt at this strange law ; we find it righteous and equitable. But when God applies it to our supernatural concerns, and withdraws from us gratuitous privileges which He had freely bestowed on us, then we pose before Him, and feel inclined to teach Him a lesson in morality. The sin of rationalism is truly a sin of stupidity.

The dreamers and babblers of the day are sometimes heard to say : Why did God impose this restriction on our first parents ? Why ? It was to

assert His dominion over them, to teach them that they were not independent of Him, that He was the Lord and the Master, and that they were His creatures, entirely subject to His law. It was also to try their obedience, and enable them to win their immortal crowns. The trifling character of the injunction did not diminish their guilt, but rather increased its enormity. Their sin was a sin of malice, a sin of pride ; it was an insult, an ingratitude, and a revolt. It was also a suicide and a homicide, because they knew that their disobedience would cause their own death and ruin, and the death and ruin of all their posterity.

V.—EVIDENCES OF THE FALL.

Man, then, is a fallen being ; he is a dethroned King. The doctrine of original sin, which has always been universal amongst the nations of the world, is so fundamental that without it our present condition becomes an inexplicable enigma, and Christianity a myth. But the evidences of this great and terrible fact are so clear and luminous that their light forces itself in, almost irresistibly, on the mind of the believer.

First Evidence of the Fall : Our Inclination to Evil.

In the Græcian tragedy, the "Hippolytus," Phædra, the wife of Theseus, says : " During my long sleepless nights I have often reflected on the cause of the weaknesses and vices of the human race. We see what is good, and we do what is evil. We have the knowledge of virtue and we yield to vice. Life is full of shoals and rocks,

towards which we are hurried away by a dreadful current " (Euripides, " Hippolytus," Act II., Scene 2).

Five hundred years later St. Paul wrote to the Romans : " I find then a law, that, when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. . . . Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" (Rom. vii. 21, 24). There is no denying the law of sin. We are all inclined to evil. In order to be virtuous we have to make an incessant effort ; but in order to be vicious we have only to let ourselves go. Our nature is thoroughly debased ; we are sick and feeble, and have no strength for virtue. This anomaly, which is very striking, is an exception to the common rule. All other creatures follow the line of their destiny without deviating from it. Man alone, who is supposed to be the King of creation, transgresses it. This abnormal and monstrous condition could easily be explained if we were born virtuous, and only became wicked by occasions and surroundings, according to the dream of Rousseau ; but such is not the case. We are born wicked, and we become good only by crushing out our natural inclinations. This is a sad and humiliating truth, but the sooner we realize it, the better it is for us. Look at the child who delights in destroying inanimate objects or torturing defenceless creatures, and you will see this law exemplified. St. Augustine treats this subject beautifully in his " City of God." " Who does not know," he says, " in what state of ignorance we are born, and how, after the days of infancy, the most wicked passions begin to germinate, and break forth

with such violence and impetuosity that if the child is left to himself, there is hardly any impropriety which he will not commit? Fortunately, law and education watch over this darkness, and keep their eyes on the evil propensities that are born in us. But that is not done without anxiety and pain. For why all these threats to keep children within the bounds of duty? Why these masters and tutors, these ferules and rods which have to be used against a child dearly beloved, lest he should become unruly and wild? Why so much trouble and anxiety, if not to conquer ignorance and repress concupiscence—two evils that are natural to us?" ("Civitas Dei").

It is a fact, therefore, an undeniable fact, that man is born wicked, and that if he becomes virtuous it is only by curbing his passions. Now, a fact must necessarily have an explanation. God is the author of our nature, since He is our Creator. Can we ascribe this disorder to Him? To ask this question is to solve it. God cannot be the author of a moral evil. If we consult the annals of history, we find at once that the past generations were born with the same evil propensities. We can trace back the law of sin from age to age till we come to our first parents. Then comes the all-important question: In what state did they come out from the hands of God? Did the Almighty place in their souls the seeds of vice? Did He bend their wills towards evil? Did He make their hearts the sport of a thousand passions? Did He darken their minds and dull their faculties? He could not do so without ceasing to be God. Therefore we must necessarily

admit that man has fallen from a higher estate ; we must admit a primitive Fall which has infected the whole race.

Second Evidence of the Fall : Contradictions of our Nature.

Man is far more incomprehensible without the dogma of original sin than this dogma is incomprehensible to man. Who will explain the contradictions which we see in our nature—that horrible mixture of virtue and vice, of light and darkness, of greatness and misery, of nobleness and degradation, of pride and abjection, of joy and sorrow, of love and hatred, of knowledge and ignorance, of courage and fear, of heroism and cowardice, of hope and despair ? Is it not manifest that our entire being has radically changed, and that our faculties are disconcerted ?

“ Être d’un jour, épuisé de souffrances,
 J’ose rêver un ciel consolateur ;
 Fils du néant, pourquoi tant d’espérances ?
 Fils d’un Dieu bon pourquoi tant de douleurs ? ”
 MONSEIGNEUR GERBET.

“ Man is not like a ragged mendicant who never knew the comforts of opulence. He is like a monarch who has lost his crown. He carries with him the remembrance of his former grandeur. Under the rags that cover him he is full of dignity, and it is easy to see that he has borne a diadem. As a noble exile who treads the borders of the fatherland from which he has been expelled, and is ready to seize the first opportunity to recover his rights, so man, the noble exile of Heaven, strives incessantly during

life after a restoration which he hopes to achieve in the end. From the abyss of his misery he longs after his former abode, which appears to him as the immutable sojourn of purity, truth, justice, and happiness" (Nicolas, "*Études*," t. xi., p. 20). We have an infinite craving for truth, and yet we grope in the dark and soon lose our way. We count the stars of Heaven, measure their orbits, and follow their revolutions, and we cannot tell the nature of a grain of dust. We are never satisfied; we always crave for something higher, something better, and we yearn for a felicity which we can never possess. There is nothing more inconstant and capricious than our will; it is like a reed shaken by the wind, and yet nothing can break it, nothing can overcome it. Our faculties can never be properly balanced; there is between them a perpetual clashing. Heart and reason, will and understanding, are almost always at variance. If we rise in civilization, we sink in morality and virtue; if we excel in positive science, we lose our imagination; if we yield to emotional feelings, we surrender our reason. Poetical dreams are inseparable from shallowness of thought; enjoyment and comfort produce laxity and languor; suffering and patient trial produce strength of character and goodness of heart. "Mysterious, variable, inexplicable, man is manifestly in the state of a being which some accident has overthrown; he is a palace that has crumbled to pieces, and has been rebuilt with its ruins, where you behold some parts of an imposing appearance, and others extremely offensive to the eye; magnificent colonnades which lead to nothing; lofty

porticoes and low ceilings ; strong lights and deep shades ; in a word, confusion and disorder pervading every quarter, and especially the sanctuary ” (“ Genius of Christianity,” part i., book iii., chap. iii.). Is it not reasonable, then, to admit that some great misfortune has befallen man and wounded his nature, and that his primitive condition was far different from what it is now ? “ Whence comes this strange disproportion ? ” exclaims Bossuet, “ and why this want of symmetry in the parts of the edifice ? Do not these crumbling walls, erected on this magnificent foundation, cry out that the work has been undone ? Consider the building ; you will see indisputable marks of a Divine hand, but the disproportion of the work will tell you that sin has done its own work. O God ! what a mixture ! Is that the man made to the image of God, the miracle of His wisdom, the masterpiece of His hands ? It is he. But whence this discordance ? Because man has built according to his own fashion on the work of his Creator ” (Bossuet, “ Sermon sur la Mort ”).

Third Evidence of the Fall : Trials and Miseries of Life.

An old poet, speaking of the miseries which afflict the human race, says : “ As a mariner cast on to the shore by the angry waves, so the child begins life in a state of helplessness and destitution, naked, lying on the earth, speechless. As soon as he has been vomited by nature and cast into the light of day, he fills the place that receives him with ominous cries, and it is well that it be so, for

the unfortunate will have to encounter so many evils!" (Lucretius, lib. v., pp. 223-228). Man seems to be born only to suffer and to die. How many trials in the life of a mortal! Who could reckon all the sufferings, all the infirmities, all the afflictions which accompany us through life, and pursue us even to the grave? Who could describe all the toils and tribulations of the children of men, the sweat of their daily toil, so many tears shed, so many hearts broken, so many mothers weeping beside the empty cradles of their departed babes, so many commotions in nature, strifes and wars, pestilences and famines, the earth covered with brambles, the very flowers armed with thorns or distilling a deadly poison, and man himself plunging a dagger into the heart of his fellow-man?

" Look at the roses saluting each other,
 Look at the herds all at peace on the plain,
 Man, and man alone, makes war on his brother,
 And laughs in his heart at his peril and pain."

A kind of malediction seems to follow us everywhere, and to blight all our undertakings. The greatest institutions in the world are cemented in blood. Everything intended to be durable and permanent must have martyrs. The principal events of history have been fertilized, and the greatest ages have been watered, by torrents of blood. Strange to say, the pure and the godly are those who suffer most; they are crushed and oppressed by despotic vice and cruel impiety. From one end of the earth to the other we see claw and tooth tearing and torturing the flesh of integrity and weakness. And now I ask

again : Is that man such as he came out from the hands of God ? Is that the King of creation and the masterpiece of the world ?

There is a passage in Milton's "Paradise Lost" which I can never read without emotion. After the fall of Adam, an Angel led the poor exile to the summit of a high mountain, and disclosed to him all the calamities and afflictions that were to afflict his race in the course of ages. He said to him :

"Adam, now ope thine eyes ; and first behold
The effects, which the original crime hath wrought
In some to spring from thee, who never touch'd
The excepted tree, nor with the snake conspir'd ;
Nor sinn'd thy sin, yet from that sin derived
Corruption, to bring forth more violent deeds."

And Adam opened his eyes, and saw, in a vision, the funeral procession of all human iniquities and sorrows. He wept and said :

"O miserable mankind ! to what fall
Degraded, to what wretched state reserv'd !
Better and here unborn. Why is life given
To be thus wrested from us ? who, if we knew
What we receive, would either not accept
Life offer'd, or soon beg to lay it down,
Glad to be so dismiss'd in peace. Can thus
Th' image of God in man, created once
So goodly and erect, though faulty since,
To such unsightly sufferings be debas'd
Under inhuman pains ?"

(Book XI.)

Strange to say, we feel a secret attraction for scenes of sorrow and mourning. Whatever inclines us to melancholy and sadness has for us inexpressible charms. We delight in the contemplation of ruins, whether they be the work of time or of men. The

sight of a destroyed city, the cracked walls of an old castle, or the broken columns of a temple, have irresistible attractions. We stop, riveted to the spot, musingly thinking of the past. Poetry does not move nor enchant us if it exhibits only scenes of happiness ; we must have unhappy heroes struggling with adversity, or overwhelmed with misery. In painting we love to rest our eyes on scenes of tribulation and anguish ; it may be a storm, a battle-field, a scaffold, a grave. All these things have for us a kind of bewitching fascination ; they stir the very depths of our hearts. I have seen a strong and hardy-looking man unable to repress his tears at the sight of a picture representing a battle-ground. I have seen others motionless, spellbound, and all absorbed in the vision of a disabled and half-submerged barque about to be swallowed up by the waves. What is the cause of this ? Why do these scenes of sadness and these decayed monuments stir our feelings and provoke our tears ? Ah ! because there is between them and our shattered being a great and unmistakable resemblance ; there is a sympathy which only vulgar souls do not acknowledge. " Man is but a crumbling edifice, a wreck of sin and death " (Chateaubriand).

Fourth Evidence of the Fall : 'The Condition of Woman.

If we cast a glance at the history of the world, we see at once that the sentence pronounced by God against the first woman has been wonderfully fulfilled : " Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee "

(Gen. iii. 16). In pagan antiquity woman was a slave ; she was a slave in Rome, in Athens, in Sparta, the most enlightened cities of those times. She was no more the companion, the equal of man, " a help like unto himself " (Gen. ii. 18). Her rights were measured by man, or rather she had no rights at all. Her lot was that of a drudge, and she had to bow her head in blind submission under the iron yoke of her husband, or of her own children. Even now, in countries where she has not been regenerated by Christ—in Asia, in Africa, in Oceania, her condition is truly lamentable—it is that of a beast of burden. Yet if we consider her natural abilities, her intelligence, her will, her heart, and all the other gifts of nature—purity of soul, loftiness of character, refinement of manners, virtue, goodness, culture—she is not only equal, but often superior, to man. How is it, then, that she groans in abjection and slavery, and that her sacred and inalienable rights of sister, of mother, and of spouse, are ignored ? Try, and you will find no other explanation but the mystery of the primitive Fall.

Fifth Evidence of the Fall : The Fear of God.

There is in the human heart a feeling which is universal, and extends to all places and times, a feeling of which, after so many generations, we are the unfortunate witnesses, and that is the fear and dread of God. How strange ! God so merciful, so patient, so good ! God Who compares Himself to the mother who caresses her child ; to the father of the prodigal son, welcoming the wanderer and pressing him to his heart ; to the good Samaritan who

saves the life of the traveller wounded by robbers ; to the good shepherd who runs after the strayed sheep, and brings it back to the fold ; God Who became a little child to excite our confidence and love, and Who died for us on a cross ! The idea of God provokes in the human heart a feeling of dread and terror ! We are afraid of Him. After their fault our first parents concealed themselves from the face of the Lord. Their shame and fright followed their posterity, and we can notice it in all the religions of pagan times ; we can notice it even in our own days. Is it not a fact that Moham-medanism, Brahmanism, and Buddhism are religions of terror ? The Jews themselves were not free from this terrible feeling, and for that reason their Law is called the Law of fear. This dread of God is not, indeed, so striking amongst Christians as it is elsewhere, but still we find it only too often in the hearts of believers, and sometimes it reaches the confines of despair. What explanation can we give for this fact, if not the consciousness of a primitive fault, and the fear of a Judge Who pursues the sin of the father in the child through generation and generation ?

But there is more than this. If we consult the annals of nations, we remark in every people an instinct of expiation, a desire to appease the Deity by sacrifices. No one can deny that the practice of immolating victims has always been universal, and that it has always been considered as the most essential and necessary act of worship. How are we to account for this ? Is it not manifest that this perpetual libation of blood, which we find at the

very cradle of the race, has its origin in the confused idea that a fault was committed, and that it is necessary to expiate it ?

Sixth Evidence of the Fall : The Traditions of Peoples.

The ancient theogonies are unanimous in asserting that the Golden Age came to an end by a fault which defiled the whole race, and they mention the serpent and the woman as the authors of our ruin. The fables of Pandora and Prometheus, so well known in mythology, are like the summary of all the traditions of pagan times concerning the fall of man. Pandora was the first woman, and, like Eve on the day of her creation, she was adorned with all the gifts of Nature, and enriched with all the treasures of Heaven. Her maker, wishing to try her obedience, entrusted to her the care of a mysterious box, which he forbade her to open. But through a curiosity so natural to her sex she transgressed the divine command, and lo ! all the ills and misfortunes which afflict the human race came forth and spread like a torrent over the face of the earth. Hope alone remained at the bottom of the fatal box, Hope the only consolation, and the last refuge of unfortunate mortals. Prometheus, the son of the Titan Iapetus, having stolen fire from Heaven, was chained to a rock on Mount Caucasus, where a mysterious vulture, born of a monster that was half woman and half serpent, devoured his liver—touching symbol of fallen man, whose heart is torn by remorse and tormented by despair.

According to Persian traditions, Meschia and Meschiana, our first parents, enjoyed perfect happi-

ness as long as they remained pure and holy, but having allowed themselves to be tempted by Ahriman, the genius of evil, the whole world was filled with misery and shame ("Zend-Avesta," t. ii., p. 378). The Ahriman of the Persians is evidently the same as the Tchi-eou, or Dragon, of the Chinese, the Typhon of the Egyptians, the Python of the Greeks, the Kali of the Hindoos, and the Satan of the Christians and Jews. He is often represented under the form of a serpent. We read in the sacred books of the Chinese that man, in the beginning, was good and virtuous, and all Nature was subject to him. But having revolted against God, the harmony of the universe was broken up, and the earth was flooded with the crimes and abominations of the fallen race (Ramsay, "Mythology"). The Mongols, the Japanese, and the Scandinavians, have exactly the same traditions (Nicolas, "Études," t. ii., p. 46).*

In the old legends of the Mexicans, in America, the first woman is always associated with a serpent.

Quite recently a curious discovery was made near the town of Brownsville, in the State of Texas. A storm having overthrown an oak-tree that was not less than 600 years old, it laid bare a huge stone, on which several figures had been carved, and amongst others a man and a woman separated by a tree, the woman holding fruits in her hands ("Ann. de la Littérature et des Arts," t. x., p. 286).

These facts are overwhelming, and we could

* For a more detailed and quite modern treatment of these traditions, the reader is referred to the writings of Monseigneur de Harlez, Spiegel, Darmsteter, Geldner, Bishop Casartelli, etc.

multiply them almost indefinitely. Let us still appeal to two witnesses who have been called the greatest luminaries of pagan times—namely, Plato and Cicero. The former says : “ Our human nature and all our faculties have been deranged and corrupted in the head of the race ” (“ Tim. and Phœd., ” t. i., p. 107 ; Ed. Bipont). The latter is not less explicit : “ At the sight of the errors and calamities of human life,” he says, “ the ancient divines, and all those who had the mission to interpret and expound sacred mysteries, taught that we were born in this state of misery to expiate some great crime committed in a higher state, and it seems to me that there is some truth in this. Hence I give my assent to the thought of Aristotle, that our misfortune is much the same as that inflicted on the unfortunate victims who fall into the hands of Etrurian brigands. They are bound and tied face to face with dead corpses. Such is the condition of the soul united to the body ” (Hortensius, “ Sive de Philosophia fragmenta ”). Cicero here alludes to the common belief of the ancients that the soul had been cast into the body as into a prison or a grave in punishment of a crime.

It is a fact therefore clearer than the light of day, a fact universal and undeniable, that all nations have acknowledged a primitive Fall, the cause and beginning of all evil, and that this fall was occasioned by a serpent and a woman. Now this general consensus of all peoples on a point of such momentous importance cannot be the result of chance.

CHAPTER II

THE REDEEMER OF THE RACE—HIS PREPARATION AND EXPECTATION.

I.—THE DECREE OF THE INCARNATION.

AFTER his fall man became insolvent. He was utterly unable to pay his debt and redeem himself. His powerlessness and destitution were simply absolute. The malice of an offence must be measured, not by the condition of the offender, but by the dignity of the person offended. Now, God being infinite in every one of His attributes, any insult offered Him, any revolt against Him, must have a character of infinite malice, and therefore requires an infinite atonement. No creature in Heaven or on earth can possibly discharge the debt of sin, because no creature can supply an infinite expiation. If all human beings, if all living creatures, if all the choirs and hierarchies of Angels, were to unite their merits and their crowns in order to atone for one single sin, the atonement would be insufficient. God might have condoned the debt, but then His justice would have received no satisfaction, His glory would have been tarnished, and our reproach would never have been blotted out. He determined therefore to exact full and complete

satisfaction, and in His terrible justice He looked out for a victim worthy of His infinite excellence, a victim spotless in purity, matchless in greatness, and unbounded in acceptableness, and He found it in His own beloved Son.

“ In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ” (John i. 1-14). This interior Word or Thought of God is the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He came to redeem and save the fallen race. Leaving the splendour of His eternity, He assumed human flesh, and became man without ceasing to be God. As man He suffered and died, and as God He infused into His sufferings a power of expiation and an energy of merit more than sufficient to redeem thousands and millions of worlds. The Incarnation is the greatest of all the works of God, the consummation of His wonders and mercies, the embrace of the Creator and His creatures. It manifests in the most striking manner all the attributes and perfections of the Godhead. Men are heard sometimes to dispute about the Divine perfections, but how little do they know if they do not believe in the mystery of the Incarnation ! On the contrary, the Christian child who knows his religion has an almost unlimited knowledge of the Deity. Question him about the Eternity and Immensity of God, His Wisdom, His Mercy, His Power, His Justice, and he will return answers that would have bewildered the greatest sages of antiquity. A God becoming man, and dying on a gibbet for His ungrateful and rebellious children ! What an idea this fact gives us of His goodness and

mercy ? A God defeating our love of pleasure by His sufferings, conquering our pride by His humiliations, and overcoming our love of riches by His poverty ! What an idea of His infinite wisdom ! A God sacrificing His only Son because He had taken on Himself the iniquity of man ? What an idea of His inexorable justice ! Besides, the Incarnation raises man to a higher position than before his fall ; it enables him, through the Sacraments, to increase and develop in his soul the life of God ; it incorporates him through the Eucharist with the Incarnate Word. Finally, it deifies the whole creation, because, man being the compendium of the world, it is manifest that the Son of God, by assuming human nature, ennobled and glorified the whole universe.

II.—THE REDEEMER EXPECTED BY THE JEWS.

When God pronounced the sentence which banished Adam and Eve from the terrestrial Paradise, and condemned them to toil, and suffer, and wander on the face of the earth, a word of hope cheered and comforted the heart of these poor exiles. God announced to them that a daughter of their race would one day crush the head of their enemy, and bring forth a Saviour Who would take away their reproach, and pay the debt of their sin (Gen. iii. 14, 15). This great prophecy, which manifests so clearly the goodness and mercy of God, re-echoed throughout all generations. A people was chosen to preserve the deposit of tradition. One hope, one aspiration, pervades the history of the Jewish people : the hope, the expectation of the

great Redeemer. The patriarchs and prophets, the Kings and pontiffs, came, one after the other, to revive the wonderful expectation and perpetuate its remembrance. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, Isaias, Ezechiel, Daniel, Malachy, and all the other seers of Israel write by anticipation the history of the Liberator, and describe the marks and characters that will distinguish Him. They call Him King, Priest, Legislator, God the Mighty, the Prince of Peace, the Angel of the Covenant, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, God with us, and they say that His going forth is from the days of eternity. They long and crave for His coming, and their holy impatience is only rivalled by their enthusiasm. "O Lord God of hosts, show Thy face, and we shall be saved" (Ps. lxxix. 20). "O that Thou wouldst rend the Heavens, and wouldst come down" (Isa. lxiv. 1). "Drop down dew, ye Heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour" (Isa. xlv. 8). "Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the ruler of the earth" (Isa. xvi. 1).

They mention the Precursor who will prepare the way before Him, the number of years that will elapse before His coming, His birth from a Virgin-Mother in Bethlehem of Juda, the adoration of the Magi. They say that the second temple will be more glorious than the first, because it will be honoured by the presence of the Redeemer. At His coming the nations that walk in darkness and dwell in the region of the shadow of death will be filled with brightness. Meek and gentle of heart, He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking

flax. His miracles will be the pledge and the seal of His Divine mission. The eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf shall be opened ; the lame shall walk, and the dumb speak ; the lepers shall be cleansed, and the dead shall rise again. The poor and the little ones shall have the Gospel preached to them, and truth shall become the inheritance of all. Thus the whole history of the Saviour passes before the astonished view of the Prophets of Israel. They describe every detail and circumstance of that wonderful life, but they insist principally on the sad and gloomy visions of Gethsemani and Golgotha. They see the Man of Sorrows covered with the iniquities of the world. There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness. Rejected and despised by His own people, as the most abject of men, He is sold like a slave for thirty pieces of silver, and led, as a sheep, to the slaughter. His hands and feet are pierced, He is drenched with gall, lots are cast for His garments, and finally He is cut off from the land of the living. But it is not all over with Him. The scene now changes, and the seers contemplate His triumphs. His sepulchre is glorious, and His body does not see corruption. He receives the Gentiles for His inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for His possession. All nations worship Him, and all the Kings of the earth adore Him. The old Law is abolished, and a new Covenant established for all nations, tribes, and peoples. The Jews are rejected, and their sacrifices replaced by a clean oblation, which is offered up from the rising of the sun even to its going down.

No one can deny that these predictions were made

several centuries before the coming of Christ, and that they have been fulfilled to the letter. Let any unprejudiced mind, quietly and dispassionately, read and ponder over these wonderful oracles, and if he be in good faith he will undoubtedly conclude that the finger of God is there.

III.—THE REDEEMER EXPECTED BY THE GENTILES.

The promise of a Saviour made in the Garden of Paradise was perpetuated throughout all generations. We find it amongst all nations, and at every page of the world's history. It passes from age to age, from people to people, following the migrations of races, and surviving the revolutions of empires. There is no historical fact more certain, more universal, or more singular than the expectation of the Messias. The Cumolean and Delphian oracles, as well as the Sibylline and Druidic predictions, agree with the Jewish prophecies and the traditions of peoples. It is a magnificent concert of faith and hope which defies and defeats all the contrivances and reasonings of infidelity.

Abel Remusat, who made a special study of Tartar and Chinese legends, quotes a very curious passage from one of the sacred books of the Chinese : " The minister Phi said one day to Confucius : Master, are you not a Saint ? Who answered : In vain do I try to consult the past ; my memory cannot find anyone worthy of that name.

" THE MINISTER : Were not the three Kings real Saints ? (The three Kings were the founders of three Dynasties.)

" CONFUCIUS : The three Kings were remarkable

for their goodness, and they were filled with enlightened prudence and invincible courage. But I, Kieou, cannot say they were real Saints.

“ THE MINISTER : Were not the five lords Saints ? (Five Chinese Emperors who reigned before the First Dynasty.)

“ CONFUCIUS : The five lords excelled in kindness, divine charity, and incorruptible justice. But I cannot say that they were Saints.

“ THE MINISTER : If it be so, who can be called a Saint ?

“ CONFUCIUS : I have heard that in the Western regions a Saint will appear, who, without force or constraint, will prevent troubles ; without eloquence will inspire unlimited confidence ; without subverting anything will create an ocean of good works and heroic deeds. No one can tell his name, but I, Kieou, have heard that he is to be the true Saint ” (“ Tchoung-Young,” p. 144).

The following passage is found in the same book : “ Let the holy one appear, with his virtues and his powerful energies, and the nations will not fail to pay him the tribute of their veneration ; let him open his lips and speak, and the nations will not fail to believe in him ; let him exert himself into action, and the nations will not fail to rejoice. The fame of his virtues is like an ocean which covers the whole empire, and extends even to the barbarians of the Northern and Southern regions, wherever vessels or vehicles can penetrate, or the energies of human industry can reach ; it fills all the places sheltered by the immense canopy of heaven, all the points of the earth’s surface which the sun and the light

brighten up by their rays, or the dew and morning clouds fertilize. All the human beings who live and breathe cannot fail to love and revere him; his mental powers and heroic virtues will make him the equal of God" ("Tchoung-Young," chap. xxxi.).

How forcibly we are reminded here of the words of Isaias: "The nations shall walk in thy light, and Kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about and see; all these are gathered together, they are come to thee. Thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee"! (Isa. lx. 3-6).

Plutarch, the Greek biographer and moralist, sums up, in the following words, the doctrine of Zoroaster, the founder of the religious system of the Magi, in Persia: "Ormuz is God, and Ahriman is the genius of evil. But between the two there is a mediator called Mithra. Now a time will come, fatal and unavoidable, when Ahriman, after having covered the world with all sorts of calamities, will be destroyed and exterminated. Then the rough ways of the earth shall become plain, and the valleys shall be filled. Men will have one and the same mode of living, one and the same law" ("Isis and Osiris," Nos. XLI., XLII.).

Volney, commenting on these Asiatic legends, says: "The religious and mythological traditions of the times which preceded Christ had spread

throughout Asia the universal belief in a great Mediator who was to come, a supreme Judge whose sentence would be final, a Saviour who would be King and God, a Conqueror and Legislator who would bring the Golden Age upon earth, and would deliver men from the power of evil " (*Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les Révolutions des Empires*," p. 228).

The expectation of the Messias pervades also the philosophy and literature of Greece. In the "Second Dialogue" of Alcibiades we have a clear exposition of the state of the public mind at Athens, the most enlightened city in the world. Alcibiades went to the temple to offer sacrifice; he met Socrates, and consulted him as to what prayer or request he should make to the gods. Socrates answered that things were in such a state of uncertainty and doubt that men must wait for a Teacher, a Redeemer, who will tell them what they are to do, and how they are to pray.

"SOCRATES: Nothing can be done but to wait patiently. Yes, we must wait for someone who will instruct us as to our duties to God and our fellow-men.

"ALCIBIADES: When will this time come, and who will teach us these things? I have a great desire to know this personage.

"SOCRATES: He takes interest in all that concerns you. But the mist which covers the eyes of your understanding must be dispelled, that you may be able to distinguish good from evil.

"ALCIBIADES: Let him come, then, and dispel this darkness. As for me, I am ready to do all that

he will be pleased to ordain, that I may become better than I am.

“SOCRATES : I repeat it—He of whom I speak has an infinite desire for your prosperity and happiness.

“ALCIBIADES : Would it not be preferable, then, to defer the offering of sacrifices till the time of his coming ?

“SOCRATES : Quite so ; it would be better to adopt this way than to run the risk of not knowing whether sacrifices are agreeable or disagreeable to the Deity.

“ALCIBIADES : Well and good. When that day comes, we shall make our offering to God. I hope from his goodness that it is not too far distant” (Plat., “In Alcib.,” ii.).

In Rome we find the same traditions. The grave Cicero himself mentions the celebrated prediction of the Cumæan Sibyl concerning the expected Saviour (“De Divinatione,” lib. ii.).

The poet Virgil describes in immortal verses the coming of the wonderful Child who will draw his life from the bosom of the Deity, and will put an end to the iniquities of the earth. “Come,” he says, “beloved descendant of the gods. The time announced for thy coming is drawing near. Behold at thy approach the globe of the world balances itself, the earth, the immense sea, and the unbounded heavens leap for joy. Oh, may my life be prolonged to this happy day, may a last breath remain on my lips to sing thy exploits. Come, little Child, and begin to acknowledge thy mother by a smile” (“Eclogue,” iv.).

In the Voluspa, or sacred song, of the old Scandinavians, which has been called the Apocalypse of the North, we read that Thor, the first-born of the god Odin, fought against the great serpent Midgar, whom he overthrew and killed ; but he himself lost his life in the conflict. His victory, however, restored peace to the world, and put an end to the disorders that prevailed upon the face of the earth (Mallet, " Voyage en Norvège ").

According to the traditions of some of the tribes of South America, a great serpent having spread devastation and ruin on the banks of the Orinoco River, the god Puru sent his son from heaven to destroy the monster. After a fierce encounter the beast was defeated and killed. Then Puru appeared on the scene, and he said to the demon who was still in the body of the serpent : " Depart, cursed, into hell. Thou shalt never again enter into my house " (Gumilla, " Histoire nat. de l'Orènoque," t. i., p. 171).

IV.—CONCLUSION.

It must be manifest to all that the expectation of a Saviour who was to rescue the human race from the curse of the primitive Fall is as ancient as man himself. And this Saviour, who is described as a Legislator, a King, a Priest, a Prophet, a God, the Founder of a universal religion, had the mission to restore to us our lost rights and privileges. Whether we turn to the North or to the South, to the East or to the West, whether we appeal to philosophy or theology, to poetry or history, it is all the same ; the tradition is there, clear, luminous, manifest.

Never was there, on the face of the earth, a fact more palpable, more universal, or more extraordinary. I do not see how any reasonable man can blind himself against its brilliancy. All nations and peoples are unanimous on this point. They may differ in everything else, in religion, in customs, in manners, in language ; they may even be broken up by rivalries, but here they are all of one accord and of one mind. More than this, every people has a natural craving for dominion and power, and tries to push itself on to the front ; not one is anxious to remain in the background. It would seem natural, therefore, that all nations, being interested in claiming the Redeemer for their own, should also pretend to the honour of his birth, and yet such is not the case. The Jews alone take it for granted that He will be born in the land of Juda. In confirmation of this it is remarkable how, in the regions of the West, He is mentioned as coming from the East, and in the East He is supposed to come from the West ; the geographical position of Palestine thus reconciling those strange and seemingly contradictory traditions.

The fulfilment of so many prophecies in the person of Jesus Christ proves evidently the Divine character of His mission. A prophecy is a revelation supplying its own demonstration. It is a revelation because it announces events that can only be known to God. It supplies its own demonstration because it is miraculous. In his fifth Conference on Jesus Christ Lacordaire says : “ Now, gentlemen, what think you of this ? Here are two parallel and corresponding facts, both certain, both of colossal proportions—

one which lasted thousands of years before Christ, the other which has lasted nineteen hundred years since Jesus Christ ; one which commences a great revolution, a revolution impossible to foresee, the other which is its accomplishment, both having Jesus Christ for principle, for end, and for bond of union. Once more what think you of it ? . . . When God works there is nothing to be done against Him. Jesus Christ appears before us as the moving principle of the past as well as of the future, the soul of the times which precede Him as well as of the times which follow Him. He appears before us in His ancestry, upheld by the Jewish people, the most important and remarkable people of ancient times, and His posterity, upheld by the Catholic Church, the greatest social and religious work of modern times. He appears before us holding in His left hand the Old Testament, the greatest book of the times which precede Him, and in His right hand the Gospel, the greatest book of the times which come after Him. And yet, so preceded and so followed, He is still greater in Himself than His ancestors and His posterity, than the patriarchs and the prophets, than the apostles and the martyrs. Supported by all that is most illustrious before and after Him, His personal physiognomy still stands out from this sublime scene, and, by outshining that which seemed above all, reveals to us the God Who has neither model nor equal."

CHAPTER III

THE SECOND EVE

I.—THE VIRGIN AND THE ANGEL.

THE whole world expected the Redeemer at the very time of His coming. The sceptre had departed from Juda, and the supreme power was now in the hands of strangers. The flatterers of Herod had already bestowed on him the title of Messias, and holy Simeon had received an answer that he would not see death before seeing the Christ of the Lord. Rome was also in suspense, waiting for the ruler who would introduce the Golden Age. Peace reigned everywhere, undisturbed and supreme. The mysterious stillness of the nations at that solemn moment reminds us of the peaceful tranquillity of the newly created universe, when the terrestrial Paradise, filled with all the treasures of Nature, was greeting its royal guest, when the earth was waiting for its King and master, and when God, consulting with Himself, was about to say: "Let Us make man to our image and likeness."

Over four thousand years have now passed by, but how changed is the world! The earth is overgrown with brambles, and disturbed by the clamours of the passions and the sorrows of broken hearts.



Man has forsaken God ; he worships gods of stone and wood, the work of his own hands. The cry of iniquity is heard everywhere. What crimes and abominations, what degradation and shame, what misery and sorrow ! Humanity has corrupted its ways ; from the top of the head to the sole of the feet there is no soundness in it. But the Redeemer cometh, and the whole race will soon recover its lost balance ; it will soon be crowned again with honour and glory. The Paradise of the Incarnation is prepared for His coming ; all things are ready.

On March 25, in a small village of Galilee called Nazareth, a young Virgin, pure and beautiful, was kneeling in prayer, entreating the God of her fathers to send down the Just One. She was only fifteen years of age, and her name was Mary, a name which signifies Queen and Sovereign, or Star of the Sea. Suddenly an Angel stood before her, the Angel Gabriel, one of the brightest Princes of Heaven. He said to her : “ Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee : Blessed art thou among women ” (Luke i. 28). At these words Mary was troubled ; she was surprised, overwhelmed. And no wonder. Never before had any creature been saluted with such respect by so great a personage. The message did not come from the Angel himself ; it came from God. God saluting Mary as “ full of grace ” and “ blessed among women ” ! God sending an ambassador to this child to solicit her heart ; this is so beautiful that it looks like a Divine romance ! Oh, how pure she must have been to deserve such an honour ! And how modest and humble she was ! It was not the sight of the Angel that troubled her—Angels

are so virginal—but the high praise that was so lavishly bestowed upon her. She considered herself as the least and the last of all the maidens of Israel. The thought never entered her mind that she could in any way attract the attention of the Most High. “And the Angel said to her : Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son ; and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father : and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end ” (Luke i. 30-33).

Mary was well acquainted with the Messianic prophecies, and therefore she grasped the full meaning of the Angel’s words. She understood that the Almighty had chosen her for the office of Mother of His eternal Son, and she realized all the grandeur of that dignity. She saw the infinite consequences of the Incarnation, not only for herself, but also for the whole world. And still the sublimity of this glorious destiny did not provoke in her any feeling of self-complacency or pride. She remained natural, self-possessed, peaceful, humble. The fullness of the grace that filled her soul enabled her to bear such a weight of glory with perfect composure. But before consenting to the Divine offer, she has a doubt to propose. One day, in a moment of ecstatic love, and under the impulse of an immense grace, she consecrated her young heart to God by the most beautiful of all vows, the vow of perpetual virginity. This pearl of virtues is dearer to her

even than the Divine motherhood. Nothing can shake her resolve ; she will always remain a Virgin, and therefore she asks for an explanation : “ How shall this be done ? ” The Archangel removes her doubt, and tells her that the stupendous mystery which shall be wrought in her will be the work of the Most High, and that the virtue on which she sets such a price shall suffer no detriment. Then, and only then, does Mary give her consent : “ Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it done to me according to thy word.” At that moment the hopes of forty centuries were realized : God became man : “ The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.”

How wonderful are the ways of God ! A woman had occasioned our ruin, a woman is the cause of our redemption. An Angel of darkness had been the instrument of the Fall, an Angel of light is the instrument of our regeneration. The first Eve yielded to the serpent, the second crushed his head. The Archangel addresses Mary with great respect and profound veneration ; he addresses her as a Queen, a being superior to himself. In the old dispensation men were afraid of Angels ; they were humiliated, terrified, in their presence. Disengaged from the burden of matter, the angelic nature is pure and spiritual ; it is all brightness and splendour. Their beautiful form was never defaced by sin, nor was their virginal integrity ever impaired. They are the children of God, surrounded with magnificence, and inebriated with inexpressible delights. Daniel, the holy man, the prophet of the Most High, was struck with terror at the sight of one of them ; he fell prostrate on the ground, and trembled with fear.

Behold now all is changed. A creature appears in this world of sin, bright and beautiful, endowed with all the treasures of grace and holiness. She is a daughter of our race, and we can give her the sweet name of "sister." God sends one of His Angels to salute her. This heavenly spirit falls prostrate at her feet ; he acknowledges her as his Queen, and her Son as his God. How great, how immense the dignity of the Virgin ! The Almighty overshadows her ; the Eternal becomes her child ; the Kings, her ancestors, the patriarchs, and the prophets, look upon her with admiration and love. At the sound of her voice the old world disappears, the shadows and figures vanish away, Heaven is opened to millions of souls, the power of the devil is crushed, the prophecies are fulfilled, and the dawn of the Christian world, with its millions of martyrs, virgins, and Saints, begins to appear.

But what strikes us most in the graceful scene of the Annunciation is the regard, I should say the deference, with which God treats the young Virgin ; how He respects her liberty, and leaves entirely to her choice the acceptance of the most sublime of all alliances. And this is a point of Marian Theology which is not sufficiently insisted upon. The Almighty Being Whose independence is His highest attribute, makes this young maiden, this child of fifteen, the arbiter of the greatest of all His works. He treats with her of the coming of His eternal Son, of His Incarnation, and of the Redemption of the whole human race. He consults her over this most stupendous of mysteries, and solicits her co-operation. She is free to accept or to refuse. He does not wish

to take her unawares, far less to force on her His gifts and favours. Now, I say that this condescension of God is truly wonderful, and it is well for us to remember it, because it helps our faith, and at the same time it gives us the most exalted idea of Mary's incomparable grandeur. Evidently God in the Incarnation wished to honour both sexes. He exalted the male sex, in the person of Our Lord, to a height that cannot be surpassed, but we should never forget that this exaltation is the work of the woman, and therefore must be ascribed to Mary. The Angelic Doctor compares the Incarnation to a spiritual bridal between the Son of God and our humanity. The august Virgin in this sublime union represents the whole race; she is the surety of mankind and therefore she must enjoy perfect and absolute liberty. Hence Our Lord is, and will eternally be, indebted to her for His humanity and its personal union with the Godhead, just as we are, and will eternally be, indebted to her for the Incarnation and the privileges and benefits of the Redemption. The greatness and magnificence of the destiny which is thus revealed to us is truly amazing. Let us enter more deeply into this interesting subject.

II.—THE MOTHER OF GOD.

“The Blessed Virgin,” says St. Thomas Aquinas, “being the Mother of God, has a dignity which is infinite. In this respect nothing can be greater” (P. i., 9, 25, a. 6). How true are these words! Is it not evident that Mary's dignity must be measured by the dignity of her Son? But the Son

of Mary is a Divine Person. "Let every creature be silent and tremble," says a holy Doctor; "let it scarcely dare to glance at the immensity of so great a dignity. God dwells in the Virgin with whom He has an identity of substance" (St. Peter Damian, "In Nat. B.V.," v., sect. 1). The great God Who created heaven and earth, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, became the captive and the child of Mary. There is between them a relation of consanguinity, a blood-relationship, an affinity, a union that cannot be greater, the union of a mother with the fruit of her womb. Mary is thus raised to a height that cannot be surpassed. The Divine Maternity places between her and the highest Seraphim an insuperable distance. No Angel has ever said to God: "Thou art my son." Mary has said it, and the Son of the living God has given her the sweet name of mother. With all the resources of His boundless intelligence, the Eternal could not devise anything greater than this dignity, nor could He, with all His might, create anything more sublime. It is, truly and indeed, the utmost limit of His infinite power. "God," says St. Bonaventure, "can create thousands and millions of worlds greater and more perfect than the present, but He could not create a dignity greater or more perfect than the Divine Motherhood" ("Spec. B.V.," lect. 9, 10). Mary is exalted so far above all earthly and heavenly grandeur; she is so mysteriously united to the Divinity, so intimately connected with the Incarnation, so closely bound up with the second Divine Person of the adorable Trinity, that, according to Albertus Magnus, "she

could not be greater without becoming God " ("Sup. Missus. Est. R. ad," 3, 9, 140). Hence Pius IX. calls the Divine Maternity "an ineffable miracle of the Almighty, and the crowning of all His wonders " ("Bulla Ineffabilis "). The Blessed Virgin herself declares that the mighty power of God is the measure of her greatness : "He that is mighty hath done great things to me " (Luke i. 49).

The Holy Bible tells us that the creation of the universe, and the scattering of the gigantic spheres throughout the immensity of space, was a mere plaything of God's fingers : "I will behold Thy Heavens, the works of Thy fingers " (Ps. viii. 4). But the same sacred Book describes Mary's dignity as a work in which God displays all the strength of His arm. "He hath showed might in His arm " (Luke i. 51). In fact, what does the Divine Maternity signify ? It signifies that a creature conceives her Creator, that the finite contains the infinite, that a star begets the sun, that a small vessel encloses the ocean. This is so wonderful that the mere idea of it would never have reached—I do not say the human mind, that is out of the question—but even the intelligence of the brightest Angels if God had not revealed it.

Bossuet, having to make the panegyric of Henrietta of England, says that she was the daughter, the spouse, and the mother of Kings. In these few words he thought, no doubt, that he had exhausted all praise. Mary is infinitely more than this ; she is the daughter, the spouse, and the Mother of God ; she is the daughter of the Eternal Father, the Mother of the Eternal Son, and the Spouse of the

Holy Ghost. God the Father sent His only Son to the world, but He gave Him first to Mary. God the Son assumed human flesh, but it was in Mary. The Holy Ghost overshadowed and sanctified the tabernacle of the living God, and this tabernacle was Mary. God the Father associated Mary to Himself in the performance of the greatest of all His works—namely, the Redemption of the world. God the Son came on earth to do the work of His Father, and He depended on Mary for His conception, His birth, His life, and His death. The Holy Ghost furnished the House of Gold in which the Eternal Son was to take such an admirable repose. Through Mary, God the Father acquired over His Son an authority which He had not from all eternity. It is nothing to Him to command His creatures, but to command the Incarnate Word is a glory which is infinite. Through Mary, God the Son was enabled to redeem the fallen race, and to merit for all generations those powerful graces without which we could not be saved. Through Mary the Holy Ghost became fruitful in the Trinity, and exercised jurisdiction and power over the God-made man, directing all His steps, and becoming the prime mover of all His actions (Luke iv. 18). I can never reflect without profound emotion on the immensity of Mary's glory. But what strikes me most in the sublimity of her destiny is the close intimacy of this youthful mother with her Divine Child, especially during the sacred infancy. The Son of God was absolutely dependent on her. He Who had given to the earth all its treasures, and Who had filled the universe with overflowing abundance, relied on her

for His support. She tended Him, she nourished Him, she watched over Him, she consoled Him. They lived together, they prayed together, they suffered together. During thirty years of His life He was subject to her. We cannot conceive anything more surprising, more stupendous, more incomprehensible than this dependence of the Incarnate Word.

“That God should obey a woman,” says St. Bernard, “is an unparalleled humility; that a woman should command God is an astounding sublimity.” The Redeemer had come to advance His Father’s business, and lo ! He spent thirty years of His life in the company of His mother, and in submission to her, whilst He devoted only three years to the salvation of souls. And in all this He did the will of His Father, and acted for the greatest glory of God.

III.—PERFECTIONS OF THE VIRGIN-MOTHER.

The Divine maternity is the measure of Mary’s perfections, the source of her privileges, the foundation of her holiness. It must be manifest that, having been chosen by God Himself, she was a worthy mother of God. Now, what torrents, what abysses of grace, does not all this suppose ? What outfit of perfections, what sanctity, what purity, can be too great to match her dignity ? If she is the daughter of the Father, the mother of the Son, the spouse of the Holy Ghost, then the three Divine Persons are bound in honour to make her as bright and beautiful as will suit their splendour. In the first place, it seems to me that the question of the

Immaculate Conception of the Virgin-Mother can only be a question of common sense. It is absolutely repugnant to our Christian feelings to admit that the Mother of God was at any time under the power of Satan and the law of sin ; that God abandoned to the devil the garden of the Incarnation ; or that He was satisfied with the leavings of the Prince of Darkness. If the God of all holiness condescends to become man in the womb of a virgin, He will surely choose for this great purpose a most pure creature. " I am the lover of purity," He says, " and the Giver of all holiness. I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of My rest " (" Imitation of Christ," book iv., chap. xii.). How can we suppose that the mother of such a God contracted the debt of original disgrace, or that the Almighty was not powerful enough to confer on His beautiful one the gift of integrity ? If men were free to choose their mothers, would they not select the purest of creatures ? And if they could lavish on them all the treasures of nature and grace, would they not adorn their souls with the highest perfections, and their hearts with the flowers of every virtue ? And is the Incarnate Word Who framed the maternal heart less concerned about His own honour than the children of men ? Say what you may, Mary must be a worthy mother of God. If you are a Christian, you are compelled to admit this. She must be immaculate in her origin, and all through the long years of her toilsome existence her beautiful soul must be free from the faintest shadow of the least imperfection. In His Angels, God indeed found wickedness, but He found no spot in His

mother. Exteriorly she was the mirror of gentleness, and the most refined and exquisite type of womanhood. Her senses were so recollected, her actions so well regulated, her carriage and gestures so well ordered, her gravity so amiable, her serenity so peaceful, as to appear like an Angel in human form. But all the glory of the King's daughter was within. She possessed all natural and supernatural perfections in the most eminent degree. The passions were extinct in her heart. There was nothing inordinate, no intestine war, no strife, no storm, in the sanctuary of her soul, only peace unbounded and absolute. She had no relish except for virtue, and she was attracted almost irresistibly towards everything pure, noble, and holy. In her fervour there was no relaxation, no cooling down, no remissness. The purest intention presided over all her movements, and she always acted with the utmost intensity and energy. Her soul was like a mirror reflecting all the forms of perfection. Her mind was basking in an ocean of light. She had the highest, the quickest, and the broadest intellect ever possessed by a creature. The knowledge which she had of God and of the wonders of creation incomparably surpassed that of all the greatest Doctors or the brightest Angels. Her will was powerful, and was opposed by none of those impediments which retard our way in the path of virtue. It was disengaged from fetters and hindrances, strengthened by the most efficacious graces, and superior to all the storms and commotions of this world. Her heart was burning with the purest love of God and of men. Alone of all human beings, she

fulfilled in all its plenitude the first and greatest of all commandments : " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength " (Luke x. 27). She passed through the most opposite extremes of sensibility and feeling. She tasted the very joy of Heaven, but she was also filled with bitterness, and overwhelmed with misery. As she was the ideal of all that is beautiful, the beauty of suffering could not be wanting to her. God having chosen her as the inseparable companion of His Son, and having destined her to share the agony of His dreadful Passion, formed and fashioned her heart expressly to suffer. Her dolours are beyond the reach of our minds ; they have been compared to the immense ocean. " O virgin daughter of Sion, great as the sea is thy destruction " (Lam. ii. 13). But of all the wonders of this extraordinary creature, the most surprising, the most astonishing, is the dowry of her grace. On the day of the Annunciation the Archangel saluted her as " full of grace." Here on earth she is known by the sweet name of Mary, but in Heaven she is called " Full of Grace." Grace is an emanation of the glory of God. It brings into the soul the very likeness of God's infinite beauty, and fills us with a brightness that surpasses millions of times the splendour of the sun. If we were allowed to contemplate the magnificence of a soul in the state of grace, the sight of this beautiful object would fill our hearts with torrents of delights. But the brightness of grace is susceptible of an indefinite increase, and in proportion as it increases, the soul becomes more pure, more dazzling, more Divine.

Now, Mary, at the first moment of her existence, received a dowry of grace superior to that of all Angels and Saints, and our holy Doctors tell us that she doubled this immense treasury by every one of her actions in the course of a long and toilsome existence. Represent therefore to yourselves the boundless ocean doubling itself at every moment of the day and the night during weeks, and months, and years, and you will have but a faint idea of Mary's incredible wealth. And now all this is changed into glory. The glorious Virgin is immersed in the inaccessible light of God, and resembles a diamond of inestimable worth plunged into the brightness of ten millions of suns.

IV.—MARY, THE CONCERN OF ALL AGES.

Catholics are accused of being too lavish in their praises of Mary, and of insisting too much on her privileges. But how shallow is this criticism ! We shall never honour and love her as much as she has been honoured and loved by God. Was she not chosen by God Himself as His mother and His spouse ? And did not the Holy Ghost proclaim through her pure and chaste lips that all generations would call her blessed : " Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed " (Luke i. 48). Nothing can be more wonderful than this strange prophecy, and I defy the unbeliever to account for its fulfilment. When Mary uttered these words she was but a child of fifteen, and no human being could possibly forecast her destiny. Unknown to the world and to herself, she had spent twelve years of her life in the solitude of the temple. She was as

modest and humble as she was pure, and her sole ambition was to remain hidden in her obscure home at Nazareth ; and yet she makes the surprising, the amazing, announcement that she shall be praised and honoured by all generations. And she speaks with unshaken conviction, with a perfect and sure knowledge of the future. After nineteen centuries we find that this extraordinary prophecy has been verified to the letter. In our own days the name of Mary is known from one end of the earth to the other, and everything publishes the glory of the Virgin-Mother. The shrines consecrated to her, and the congregations and confraternities founded in her name, are almost innumerable. There is not a Catholic Church without a statue or an altar in her honour. There is not a little child who, as it lisps the " Hail, Mary," does not praise her. Every day the Angelic salutation is repeated millions of times. Strange to say, Protestant churches resound with the praises of Rebecca, Judith, Esther, Magdalene, and the other women of the Old and the New Testament, but not one word of Mary, the great ideal of purity, the mirror of womanhood, the masterpiece of creation, the wonder of God ! What a strange anomaly ! But stranger still, the partisans of private judgment make it a crime for us to call Mary " blessed," and so help to fulfil her prophecy. Ah ! they may indeed banish this sweet creature from their temples and from their hearts, but there is a title which they cannot take away from her, a title which excels all praises and justifies all eulogiums, and that is the title of " Mother of God."

Mary is the work of the eternal counsel and the

concern of all ages, "*negotium sæculorum.*" She was predestined by God from all eternity as the mother of His Divine Son, and after the fall of our first parents she was promised and announced as the "woman" who should crush the head of our enemy, and restore the fallen race to its lost rights and privileges. The prophets, in their wonderful visions, beheld the glory of her destiny ; they saw her pure and spotless form afar, and painted her under the most graceful colours. She is the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys ; she is beautiful as the rising morning, fair as the moon, bright as the sun ; she is the Queen standing at the right hand of the great King in gilded clothing, and surrounded with variety ; she is the Virgin-Mother who will bring forth the Counsellor, the Liberator, the Wonderful, the Emmanuel, the God Almighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace. The Gospels themselves, which were written especially for the Son, do not forget the Mother. Mary occupies in them a very conspicuous place. This sentence alone, " Mary, of whom was born Jesus " (Matt. i. 16), is the grandest eulogium that could be bestowed on her ; it raises her to a height that cannot be surpassed. The scene of the Annunciation is perhaps the most sublime page of the Scriptures ; it is undoubtedly the most graceful. I have many times read the whole Bible from beginning to end, but I have never found anything to compare with this page in grandeur and magnificence, and at the same time it is so open, so simple, and so full of childlike faith ! There is in every word a perfume of purity and innocence that brings emotion to the

heart. Mary is represented there in her true light. The trouble of this frail creature raised suddenly and unexpectedly to the most stupendous of all dignities, her surprise, her humility, her prudence, her love of the Angelic virtue, are indeed pictures never to be forgotten. In the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation, the Flight into Egypt, and all the other mysteries of Jesus' infancy, she occupies a place which is unique, and she is exhibited to us as the inseparable companion of the Infant-God, and the greatest of all the daughters of Eve. Our Lord performed His first miracle at her request just as He made His last will in her behalf. When the Apostles drew up the immortal Creed, which was to be the Christian code of all generations, did they not give a place of honour to the august Virgin, when they said that the Son of God "was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary"? These words remind the believer of Mary's purest and brightest glory—namely, her virginity and her Divine maternity. The first Christians honoured and venerated the Mother of Jesus, as is manifest from the writings of the early Fathers, and the old paintings found in the Catacombs of Rome. The Doctors of the Church, and the greatest minds of all times and places, have been the devoted servants of that Queen of love. Devotion to Mary was the soul of the Middle Ages. It pervaded all ranks and conditions in society; it infused into the hearts of millions a great respect for womanhood, and inspired our rude forefathers with an idea of honour and chivalry that has never been surpassed. It purified the thoughts and affections of the young, and was

for the aged a beacon-light showing them the port of Heaven. No one who has any knowledge of history can deny that the love and veneration of the Virgin has exerted a powerful influence on the destinies of the race. It has contributed powerfully to form the Christian type ; it has inspired notions of gentleness, modesty, and purity, that were unknown in pagan times ; it has raised the standard of morality in the world, and placed woman in the rank which she now occupies ; finally, it has created the most sublime masterpieces in poetry, painting, and architecture. In the ages of chivalry Mary was called " Our Lady," and her veneration was always inseparable from the idea of honour and purity. Her image had its place in the Christian home ; it was erected over the entrance of public monuments, at the corners of streets, and on the cliffs of the shore, to remind all of the universal sway and the powerful influence of the great Mother of God.

A distinguished Protestant writer says : " I have always envied the Catholics their faith in that sweet, sacred Virgin-Mother who stands between them and the Deity, intercepting somewhat of His awful splendour, but permitting His love to stream upon the worshipper more intelligibly to human comprehension, through the medium of a woman's tenderness " (Nathaniel Hawthorne).

Another learned author, and an infidel, writes : " The worship of the Virgin is to my mind—the mind of an unbeliever—full of holiness and beauty. We owe to it a great deal that is ennobling in life, in art, in literature. I myself see in the Virgin the

exquisite incarnation of Divine Motherhood well worthy of the reverence of any man, whatever his theological belief may be" (Robert Buchanan). We shall close this chapter with the words of Keble :

" Ave Maria ! Mother blest !
To whom, caressing and caressed,
Clings the Eternal Child.
Favoured beyond Archangel's dream,
When first on thee with tenderest gleam
Thy new-born Saviour smiled.
Ave Maria ! thou whose name
All but adoring love may claim."

PART II
HIS LIFE

CHAPTER I

THE CHILD AND THE ARTISAN

I.—THE BIRTH OF THE DIVINE CHILD.

ST. LUKE relates "that in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled . . . and all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child" (ii. 1, 5). The august travellers crossed the plains of Esdrelon and Sichem, and after four or five days of a tedious and wearisome journey arrived at Bethlehem. "This village is located upon a long and whitish hill, whose slope, covered with vines, olive and fig trees, forms a circle of terraces, rising one above another in regular curves, like steps in a stairway of verdure" (Fouard, "The Christ," p. 46). From the hill-top the view stretches far and wide over fertile valleys and the ancient fields of Booz, where Ruth, the gentle Moabite, had gleaned, and the pastures where the boy David had tended his father's flock. Towards the east, in the direction of the Dead Sea, the

eye can distinguish the spot where Rachael was buried.

When Mary and Joseph entered the city of their fathers, the streets were filled with strangers. They knocked at the door of the hostel, but "there was no room for them." Despite their fatigue and weariness, despite the delicate condition of the holy Virgin, they had to leave the town, and seek shelter elsewhere. They retired into one of those solitary grottoes with which the mountains of Judea are honeycombed, and it was there that on a cold winter's night, December 25, the Divine Child was born. His birth was miraculous. He came forth from the virginal womb like a ray of light which traverses a globe of the purest crystal. His mother's integrity remained absolutely intact. Far from experiencing the weaknesses and sorrows of ordinary mothers, she was filled with inexpressible delights (St. Jerome, "*Adversus Helvedium*," viii.). Hence the Evangelist St. Luke tells us that she herself lavished on the newly-born Infant all the attention and care which in ordinary cases are left to strangers: "She wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke ii. 7).

The poor, the little ones, the sons of toil, were the first invited to the crib, in the person of the shepherds. They were the objects of special predilection on the part of the God-made man. An Angel was sent to them to announce the great event: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy. . . . This day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Infant wrapped

in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger " (Luke ii. 10-12). How great must have been their surprise, their astonishment, their bewilderment ! The great Redeemer has come at last ! The Messias promised to their fathers has appeared, but, O God ! what strange signs are those of His coming—a cave, a manger, an Infant wrapped in swaddling bands ! Is that the Saviour announced by the prophets—the Emmanuel, the mighty God, the Angel of the Covenant, the Wonderful, the Father of Eternity, the Dominator who will submit to His power all the nations of the earth, and who will reign from sea to sea, and from the River Jordan even to the ends of the world ? What a reversal of all their dreams and of all their hopes !

After the shepherds, the Magi were invited to the crib. After the poor, the rich ; after the humble, the wise and the learned ; after the little ones, the powerful and the great, because Christ came to save and redeem the whole race. When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem, they inquired, saying : " Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to adore Him ? " (Matt. ii. 2). Where is He that is born King of the Jews ? No doubt, many a time on the way they had asked the same question. They had asked it from men and from women, from learned and ignorant, from young and old, from rich and poor ; but they had received no answer. Where is He that is born King of the Jews ? No one seems to know, no one seems to trouble himself about it. Since the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Jews had expected their Redeemer ; the prophets had sighed for Him,

all the holy men of the Old Covenant had wished to see his day. He comes at last, and no one cared for Him. The Doctor of the Law expounds the Testament, the Levite repairs to the Temple, the Pharisee enlarges his fringes, and makes broad his phylacteries, the merchant speculates, the man of the world enjoys life, the man of toil goes to his labour, but the Messiah is forgotten. He is far, far away from the thoughts and the hearts of men !

II.—THE LESSONS OF THE CRIB.

The humble birth of the Son of God has always proved a stumbling-block and a scandal to those who wish to measure the infinite designs of God by their own narrow views. It has been considered a folly by the strong-minded wits of all ages. " Preserve me from it all !" cried the impious Marcion, at the outset of Christianity. " Away with these pitiful swaddling bands and this manger unworthy of the God whom I adore !" Tertullian answered him : " Nothing can be more worthy of God than to trample underfoot our perishable grandeur, in order to redeem and save us " (Tertull., " *Adversus Marcionem*," lib. ii., cap. 27). How true that is ! A God coming from Heaven to teach us a lesson of humility has no need of our glittering toys, of the false appliances, the frivolous trifles, with which the grandees of this world cover their misery. Did He not give to the sun its splendour, to the earth its treasures, and to the whole creation its splendid harmony ? Was it worthy of His infinite majesty then, to clothe Himself with the effeminate trappings of our vanity ? Ah, no ! I would not recognize

my God under this false brightness. He came to assuage our sorrows, to wipe away our tears. Would he have done so if He had been born in a palace? Would He have been in all things like unto us? Would the lonely, the sorrowful, and the distressed have dared to approach Him? Would He Himself have ventured to say: "Blessed are the poor;" "Blessed are they that mourn;" "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake"? These words, which have done more towards the alleviation of our miseries than all the speculations of philosophy, would have been powerless without the crib. "Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened; come to Me, you who are rejected and despised, and remember that there was no place for Me in the houses of Bethlehem. I came to My own, and My own received Me not. Perhaps you have no shelter against the storms of the night, no place whereon to lay your weary limbs. Behold your God lying on a little straw in the manger of a stable! Come to Me, you who are persecuted and proscribed, and remember that a few days after My birth I had to flee into exile from the fury of a mortal king! Come to Me, you who have offended My Father and blasphemed His holy Name. Perhaps in your despair you say that there is no hope for you. Oh, do not be afraid. I am but a child; and I am come to forgive you." What a profound but consoling mystery! An Infant-God, a God Who weeps, a God Who suffers hunger and thirst, a God unable to speak, a God cradled in a manger, a God destitute of the necessities of life! That is indeed a scandal for the infidel; but for us believers it is a

mystery of love. The Child of the crib came to reform our vices, He came to destroy the prevalent notions and maxims of the world, to crush our pride, to defeat our love of pleasure and riches. For many centuries philosophers and sages had tried by all means in their power to heal these disorders, but in vain. The Babe of Bethlehem has accomplished this wonder by His humiliations and sufferings. Let the sensual man look at the rags which protect the delicate flesh of this Child ; let the proud reflect on the abasement, the annihilation of a God ; let the worshippers of gold give a thought to the poverty and destitution of the Creator of Heaven and earth ; in a word, let them all look at the crib, and if they have a heart they will strike their breast in shame, and say with the publican in the Gospel : " O God, be merciful to me a sinner." The goodness of God in this mystery is truly infinite. The Redeemer might have come to us in the state of a perfect man, with a body directly created by the Divine Power ; but then He would not have been the bone of our bone, the flesh of our flesh, He would not have been the " Son of Man," and therefore He chose to be born of a mother, and He subjected Himself to all the powerlessness of infancy. The prophet exclaimed in wonderment : " A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us " (Isa. ix. 6). The great God Who calls Himself the Terrible, the Mighty One, the God of armies, is reduced by love to what is weakest and feeblest in human nature ! Let worldlings and sages and all those who have no higher hope than the brute creation be scandalized, let them babble out their despairing theories and

foam out their own confusion. How many wounded hearts have they healed by their empty speculations, how many sufferers have they relieved? Ah! the world has no need of them, the world can do without them. But the world cannot do without the crib. The crib is the joy of the unfortunate, the consolation of the distressed, the hope of the persecuted, the glory of the race. It is the poetry of the poor, the book of the Saints.

III.—THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

Forty days after His birth the Child Jesus was presented in the Temple according to the prescription of the Law. Mary, who was purer far than the purest Angels, submitted herself, through humility, to the right of purification. Daughter, spouse, and mother of God, Queen of Angels and men, she had not forgotten the “great things” which the Almighty had done to her. She knew that the Divine maternity had raised and exalted her above all women, and that all generations would call her blessed, and yet she remained as humble and modest as she was before. She did not wish to be distinguished from the other Israelite mothers, and therefore she offered two turtle-doves for herself and five shekels of Jewish money for the redemption of her child. It was on that occasion that Holy Simeon acknowledged his Saviour. He was advanced in years, and had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. Taking the Child into his arms, this venerable man exclaimed with transports of delight: “Now Thou dost dismiss

Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace. Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples : a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel " (Luke ii. 29-32).

Some time after the Presentation the Holy Family had to leave the land of their fathers. Herod, the usurper of the throne of Juda, had all his life dreaded a rival ; and this apprehension, blighting his existence, made him shed torrents of blood, even in his own family. To consolidate his throne he had espoused the daughter of the last King of Juda, but the Jews, who could not forget his origin, hated him as a foreigner and as a tyrant. After thirty years of reign his jealousy was once more aroused by the ominous announcement that a King was born to the Jews in Bethlehem of Juda. Remembering some of the prophecies concerning the Messias, he trembled for his crown, and ordered the massacre of the Holy Innocents. But an Angel appeared to Joseph in the darkness of the night, and bade him take the mother and the Child and fly into Egypt. Certain local traditions mention the village of Matarea, which is two hours' journey from Cairo, as the abode of the Holy Family during their exile in the land of the Pharaohs. It is well known that one hundred and seventy-five years before the coming of Christ, under the persecution of Antiochus, a Jewish colony conducted by the High Priest, Onias, settled down in that place, worshipping the God of Israel, according to the rites and prescriptions of the Law. They even built, in this land of idols, a temple to Jehovah, which rivalled that of Jerusalem

(*cf.* Fouard, "The Christ," chap. v., note, p. 70). But it is generally believed that, at the time of the Saviour, the religion of their descendants had degenerated into a mixture of Paganism and Judaism, and that the presence in their midst of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph restored the primitive faith, and became a source of salvation to this remnant of Israel. The Son of God wished to spend the first years of His life in a foreign land ; He wished to separate Himself from His relations, and from the very land of His birth, in order to be entirely Mary's own. Happy Mary to be so highly privileged ! No doubt she toiled and suffered, but it was all *for* Jesus and *with* Jesus.

After their return from Egypt the Holy Family retired to the little city of Nazareth. The Divine Child was fast growing into a beautiful boy, advancing in wisdom and age before God and men. Who could describe His candour, His meekness, His innocence ? All that the imagination of men and the intelligence of Angels can conceive most graceful and most sublime was reproduced in His pure and gentle face. That face so beautifully cast was the reflection of everything noble, peaceful, and virginal. All virtues shone there in their sweetest splendour ; there also all the isolated beauties of childhood were summed up and blended together. The lips of the Holy Child breathed a goodness that cannot be described, a love of God and men truly undefinable and Divine. The brightness of the Divinity escaping as it were from His sacred Person, enhanced and magnified beyond measure exceedingly the ravishing expression of

His angelic countenance. Everything that can be said or imagined, every comparison taken from this visible world, every conceivable ideal would evidently be a lowering of this inexpressible type. No dream of genius, no encomium of poet, no masterpiece of artist, can give us even a faint idea of this extraordinary Child. At times a word deeper than the abyss, stronger than eternity, escaped His sacred lips, striking the ears of His astonished parents, and filling their souls with sentiments of astonishment, love, and rapture.

He came to sanctify childhood, that age so interesting and so beautiful. The child is the flower of the race, the bright and smiling hope of the future. How important, how far-reaching in its consequences was the sanctification of childhood by the Child-God ! God is jealous of the heart of man ; He wishes to possess it in all its freshness and purity before it is withered by the foetid atmosphere of the world. Children are His choicest treasures. "Suffer the little children to come to Me, and forbid them not " (Matt. xix. 14). Is it not a fact that if there is anything beautiful in the universe, anything that is truly worthy of the admiration of Heaven and earth, it is a young heart which evil has not touched, a young soul, fresh and pure, in all the charm of its first bloom and grace ? I am not surprised at the terrible anathemas pronounced against those who scandalize children.

At an age when the child is attracted by the fascination of deceitful images, and plunged into a sea of dreams and illusions, when he experiences that unbounded restlessness which is the forerunner

of merciless passions, when impressions and phantoms succeed one another in his imagination and heart like the waves of a troubled sea, how important it is to fix his affections on the Child-God, and to reveal to his heart the sweetness of Jesus. No greater mistake could be made by the politicians of the present day than to banish Jesus from the school, and to extinguish that light without which the world will inevitably perish. By closing the mind of the child to the splendour of Christianity you paralyze the noblest faculty of his soul, you render him defenceless, and you rob him of those high principles which should guide or restrain him amidst the storms of life.

When Jesus was twelve years of age He went up to Jerusalem with His parents to celebrate the Passover, and, having fulfilled the days, they returned, but the child remained in the City, and His parents knew it not. "And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the Temple sitting in the midst of the Doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers" (Luke ii. 42-47). Josephus relates that the multitude of the pious Jews who went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, from all parts of Palestine and surrounding districts, was innumerable. He says that one year the number of lambs immolated during the festivities amounted to two hundred and fifty-six thousand ("De Bello Judaico," ii. 1, 3; vi. 9, 3). As the Paschal board was spread for a whole family, and each lamb was served up for a group varying between ten and twenty persons, we must conclude

that the number of pilgrims present in Jerusalem on that occasion exceeded three millions. Galilee being the most populated part of Palestine (Joseph., *id.*, iii. 3, 2), the visitors from this province amounted to hundreds of thousands. Their caravan, composed of long files of travellers with camels and mules, was never ready to start before the middle of the day, and the children were not always with their parents. It is easy thus to understand how Mary and Joseph could lose sight of Jesus during a whole afternoon. There were at the time some renowned Doctors in Jerusalem. The great Hillel was dead, but Shammai and Jonathas, the son of Uzeil, were the lights of those days, whilst Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were already considered and revered as oracles (*cf.* Fouard, "The Christ," p. 84). These great Doctors had a busy time during the Paschal solemnities, solving many cases of conscience and other difficulties concerning the Law. Great was the surprise of Mary and Joseph when they saw the Divine Child sitting with the oracles of Israel. His answer to their sorrowful and loving complaint is like the summary of His life: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke ii. 49). He reminds them of the mission which He had come to fulfil on earth, namely, to promote God's honour and glory. "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them" (*id.*, 51). This short sentence sums up His youth and the best years of His manhood. The curtain now falls over His life. Mary claims Him as her own, and He retires with her into solitude and silence, sacredly

screened off from vulgar approach. Who will ever understand the grandeur and magnificence of Mary's destiny? The Son of God, as we have already observed, came from Heaven to do His Father's business, to enlighten the world, and save the human race, and behold, He devotes only three years to this great work, whilst He remains thirty years with His Virgin-Mother! He was subject to Mary and Joseph! The creator of Heaven and earth, the Lord of lords and the King of kings, submits Himself to the guidance of His creatures! He helps His foster-father in his mechanical trade, and His holy mother in the discharge of little domestic duties!

IV.—THE ARTISAN.

Before the coming of Christ manual work was deemed unworthy of man by the Greeks and Romans, the most enlightened and the proudest peoples in the world (Plato, "*De Republica*," 2). In Rome the man of toil was reckoned a beast of burden, a barbarian, a man of naught, a slave (Cicero, "*Quæst. Tusc.*," v. 36). The Jews had a more exalted idea of the dignity of labour. Every Jewish child, whatever his rank and condition, had to learn a trade. St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, was a tent-maker, and this handicraft gave him a certain independence in his Apostolic mission, and enabled him, in times of persecutions, to fall back on a useful employment, and work for his livelihood. Rabbi Ismael, the celebrated astronomer, made needles; Rabbi José was a tanner, and Rabbi Jochanan a shoemaker. But all this was a scandal

to the Gentiles, and hence the Son of God had to come from Heaven and teach men the dignity of labour and the merit of sanctifying our daily toils. He who was the Architect of the world spent a painful apprenticeship in the school of Joseph. His delicate hands became tanned and horny like those of an ordinary tradesman. How beautiful the sight of the poor labourer who takes his scanty meal at night, after the work of the day, and eats that bread which he has earned at the sweat of his brow ! But how much more beautiful the sight of the Son of God sharing His frugal meal with Mary His mother ! According to an opinion which is very probable, St. Joseph died when Jesus was blooming into manhood. His mission of provider and protector of the mother and the Child was fulfilled, and he went to his reward—a reward, indeed, exceedingly great. The Saviour, now able to support His mother, buried Himself in the workshop of Nazareth. There was peace and quiet in this happy home. Mary, the Queen of Angels and men, kept the humble dwelling in perfect order and performed the household duties, whilst Jesus handled the plane, the chisel, and the saw. St. Justin recalls for the instruction and edification of the primitive Church the humble work of the poor artisan. He mentions those ploughs and yokes which the Christ had made with His Divine hands out of the hard, rough wood. I can see Him receiving alike the orders of the poor and those of the rich, and then settling His little accounts with great modesty and gentleness. The beauty of His soul was visible in His eyes, and in His whole countenance, and He diffused around

Him an atmosphere of celestial purity and innocence. The sight of this noble young man was an incentive to virtue, and many wondered that such a treasure should remain hidden in a workshop. Whilst others, jealous of His merits, spurned His low estate, and laughed at the vain show and pompous display of His high-flown name of Jesus. "Is not this fellow here the carpenter, Mary's son?" A Jesus had succeeded Moses as the leader of the people of God, and introduced the Hebrews into the promised land. Another, a high-priest and companion of Zorobabel, had brought back to Jerusalem the Jews who were captive in Babylon. Another, inspired by God, had written, under the name of Ecclesiasticus, some of the most beautiful pages of the Scriptures. What a contrast between these great men and the Jesus of Nazareth! And yet, in the eyes of God and His Angels, what are these illustrious personages compared with Him Who is so soon to reveal Himself as the Saviour of mankind; the Angel of the New Covenant; the Founder of a Church that will last till the end of time, despite all the efforts and the fury of Hell; the Inspirer of all that is grand, noble, and pure in the world; the Creator of virginity and martyrdom—in a word, the Christ, the Anointed of God, Who is to revolutionize all human institutions, and renew the face of the earth? In the solitude of Nazareth He is waiting for the fulness of time. He prepares Himself for His sublime mission by a life of silence, of meditation and prayer. How few there are who imitate Jesus of Nazareth! The great curse of the day is that very few public men prepare themselves

by reflection and study for their mission in life. Too often they have no other title to pre-eminence but their audacity, their pride, and their passions. They are truly the scourges of nations, and they fill the earth with the most direful and terrible calamities. As for you, O man of toil, you are the favourite of God. Raise up your eyes towards Heaven, and remember that the Son of Man chose to be like unto you ; that He ennobled and sanctified your work by His own example. Place your strong hand in the hand of Christ and acknowledge your dignity. Miserable are those who try to deceive you and estrange you from that God by their empty speculations and impracticable dreams. What do they give you in exchange for your Christian faith ? Nothing but misery in this world and eternal despair in the next. Perhaps you imagine that in order to become a Saint and save your immortal soul you must perform heroic deeds or subject yourself to extraordinary penances. Illusion, illusion ! Look at the workshop of Nazareth, and in its light you shall see light. God does not consider the brilliancy of our actions, but simply the fervour and purity of the intention with which we perform them. Our perfection is near at hand ; if we are not Saints the fault is our own.

CHAPTER II

THE TEACHER

I.—SUBLIMITY OF HIS DOCTRINE.

A CELEBRATED infidel of the eighteenth century, after having read the Gospel, wrote the following page : “ I confess that the majesty of the Scriptures astonishes me ; the sanctity of the Gospel speaks to my heart. Look at the books of the philosophers with all their pompous display, how insignificant they are compared with this book ! Can it be that a book so sublime and yet so simple should have been the work of men ? Can it be that He Whose life is written in that book should have been but a man ? Are His words and maxims those of an enthusiast or of an ambitious sectarian ? What meekness, what purity in His morals ! What touching grace in His instructions ! What elevation in His maxims ! What profound wisdom in His discourses ! What presence of mind ! What keenness and precision in His replies ! What control over His passions ! Shall we say that the history related in the Gospel was designedly invented ? My friend, an invention is not devised in this way ; and the deeds and exploits of Socrates, of which no one doubts, are far less certain than those of Jesus

Christ. . . . Jewish writers could never have invented such tone of language and such morality. The Gospel has evidences of truth so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor of this book would be far more surprising than its hero " (Rousseau, " *Émile*," livre iv.).

Any unbeliever reading the Gospel must necessarily ask himself this question : How and where did Jesus of Nazareth find His sublime doctrine ? He did not frequent the schools of philosophy, nor did He study the Jewish Law at the feet of the Doctors. He spent His life in a workshop. And yet His teaching is incomparably superior to that of the greatest minds that have ever startled the world by their genius. And this doctrine so pure, so perfect, so thoroughly in accordance with the noblest and highest aspirations of the human heart, springs naturally and without effort from His great mind. It is so well adapted to all the needs of the race, to all the circumstances of life, to all states and conditions, that it suits alike the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the civilized man and the barbarian, the young and the old, the man of to-day and that of twenty centuries ago, the generations of the future and the generations of the past. Every fact must have an explanation. Now, here is a fact uncontroverted and incontrovertible—a fact of which hundreds of millions of human beings have been, and are still, the witnesses. How and where did the Son of the carpenter find His sublime doctrine ? Who will answer this question ? Any man whose mind is not blinded by prejudice or passion, and who seriously weighs and considers the transcending

sublimity of Christ's teaching, must necessarily conclude that the hero of the Gospel is more than a man, and that His doctrine is Divine. At His coming the whole race was hastening to inevitable ruin. There is nothing so disgusting as the sight of that rotten corpse called the "old world"; nothing so melancholy as to behold the despair of the greatest minds of antiquity discouraged, disheartened, bewailing the sad reality. The unity of God, the immortality of the soul, the origin and destiny of man, were problems without a solution. Morality and truth, virtue and vice, were words without a meaning. The majesty of innocence and the dignity of weakness were disregarded or despised. The very notion of honour and self-respect was unknown. Humanity was divided into slaves and masters, and the slaves were nothing more than beasts of burden. Whilst sages and philosophers were discussing in their schools the genealogies and crimes of their gods and goddesses, the human race was sinking into the mire of ignominy and shame. The whole world was truly plunged in darkness and in the shadow of death. And behold, all at once, without any preparation, a doctrine perfect and complete, a doctrine so strictly accurate, so clear and precise that it cannot possibly be modified or reformed; a doctrine, in fact, unchangeable like eternal truth itself, falls from the lips of an unknown artisan. An immense bright light appears suddenly and unexpectedly in an obscure corner of Galilee. It illumines the darkness with a radiant splendour, and dispels for ever the figures, the shadows, the doubts and errors of paganism. After

nineteen centuries we are still basking in the full brightness of this incomparable light. Every word and expression of the Gospel of Christ has been examined, subjected to the severest criticism, dissected and analyzed both by friends and foes, discussed by the most enlightened minds, applied to all nations and peoples—nay, even to every circumstance of individual life, and never has it been found to contain the slightest shadow of imperfection. More than this, wherever this doctrine is known, a great impetus is given to progress and civilization, enlightenment, and purity of morals. On the contrary, the nations that have not seen this light languish in apathy, barbarism, and in moral and intellectual degradation.

The Carpenter of Nazareth has not only made clear the important truths of the natural order, which had been obscured and darkened by paganism, but He has magnified and extended our vision beyond the horizon of nature, and introduced us into the wonderful regions of the supernatural. How deep and profound, but also how truly prophetic and just, are the words of the Saviour: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life!" (John xiv. 6). "Is He but a man, that Being Whose lips uttered such words? Nineteen centuries have expounded and applied this sentence without being able to exhaust its fecundity; and at the present day it still contains all the light, all the regeneration, all the security of the future. Is He but a man, that Being Who, in the midst of the profound darkness which surrounded the world in His time, so justly said of Himself: "I am the Light of the world," and

Who pronounced this prophetic judgment : ‘ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away ’ ? Is He but a man, that Being Whose doctrine by its presence or absence plunges the world in light or darkness, in virtue or vice, in life or in death ? I ask this from right reason : Is He but a man ? ” (Nicolas, “ *Études*,” vol. iv., chap. ii.).

II.—A GENERAL VIEW OF HIS TEACHING.

Reasoning is our natural way of learning and of teaching. We start from principles, and advance slowly from conclusion to conclusion, sometimes groping in the dark, and always in danger of losing our way. Long are the days and the years of application, toil, and labour, which are necessary to acquire a few shreds of truth. Consider the master and his laborious task of imparting to a disciple the knowledge which he possesses. See how cautiously he proceeds, how he divides and morsels the truth, in order to adapt it to the weakness of his pupil, how he argues, proves, and debates, in order to compel the rebellious or sluggish mind to yield to evidence. Jesus is an exception to this rule. He does not argue ; He enlightens. He simply enunciates the truth. He speaks by intuition, and teaches without effort. He is replete with light, and He communicates it in the same way as the sun sheds its splendour on the universe. The highest truths and the most sublime mysteries, the most hidden secrets of God’s infinite perfections, are to Him like self-evident principles. He has the intuition, the clear vision of them. He speaks of His own Divine life, of His Father Who is in Heaven, of His Angels, of

the judgment, and of eternity, as of something very familiar. He proposes His eternal maxims of wisdom without hesitation. He does not press His adversaries by discussions and reasonings ; He darts His light upon their minds. When the Scribes and Pharisees endeavour to catch Him in His words by their long-prepared and fine-drawn distinctions and fallacies, one word suffices to silence them and put them to shame. His answers are always clear, precise, final. Strange to say, His doctrine is so natural and so simple that it can be understood by a child ; it is so deep and sublime that it has always excited the admiration and wonder of the greatest minds. One sentence from His sacred lips is a focus of light, an inexhaustible mine of Divine wisdom. His maxims have been expounded in millions of volumes, and yet their meaning has not been exhausted, and never will be till the end of time. " In order to inculcate His doctrines," says Chateaubriand, " He chooses the apologue or parable, which is easily impressed on the minds of the people. While walking in the fields, He gives His Divine lessons. When surveying the flowers that adorn the mead, He exhorts His disciples to put their trust in that Providence who supports the feeble plants and feeds the birds of the air ; when He beholds the fruits of the earth He teaches them to judge of men by their works. An infant is brought to Him, and He recommends innocence ; being among shepherds, He gives Himself the appellation of the Good Shepherd, and represents Himself as bringing back the lost sheep to the fold. In spring He takes His seat upon a mountain, and

draws from the surrounding objects instructions for the multitude sitting at His feet. From the very sight of this multitude, composed of the poor and unfortunate, He deduces His beatitudes " (" Genius of Christianity," part iv., book iii.). The Sermon on the Mount is like the compendium of the Gospel ; it is the summary of the New Law. " Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the clean of heart. Blessed are they that suffer persecution." Great God ! what a strange doctrine ! What maxims unheard of, extraordinary, astounding ! The world had never heard such things before, that wretched world which glorifies and deifies all human passions. Pagans and Jews repeated in every tone : Happy are the rich, happy the worldly-minded ; happy all those who enjoy the good things of this life, who sit at sumptuous tables, and dwell in mansions and palaces. But woe to the little ones ; woe to the poor, the slaves, the weak, the sick, and the persecuted ; they are the outcasts and the refusē of the world. The discourse on the Mount shows Our Lord in His true light of universal Reformer and Legislator. It has done more for the restoration of the race than all the sayings and theories of philosophers and sages. How consoling for the poor and unfortunate to think that all their trials and tribulations shall be changed into an ocean of happiness, and that God Himself will wipe away all tears from their eyes ! How consoling the thought that this earth is only a place of exile, and that we shall have a whole eternity to forget the sorrows and afflictions of our present existence !

Before the coming of Christ, suffering was a malediction and a curse. It has now become a blessing, and millions of human souls consider it as the greatest school of virtue. How touching to see the Son of God stooping down to embrace our miseries, and teaching us by His works and example the priceless merit of sorrow ! “ He preaches naught but sacrifices, naught but the renunciation of earthly pomp, pleasure, and power ; He prefers the slave to the master, the poor to the rich, the leper to the healthy man ; all that mourn, all that are afflicted, all that are forsaken by the world, are His delight ; but power, wealth, and prosperity are incessantly threatened by Him. He overthrows the prevalent notions of morality, institutes new relations among men, a new law of nations, a new public faith. Thus does He establish His Divinity, triumph over the religion of the Cæsars, set Himself on the throne, and at length subdue the earth. No ; if the whole world were to raise its voice against Jesus Christ, if all the powers of philosophy were to combine against His teaching, never shall we be persuaded that a religion erected upon such a foundation is a religion of human origin. He Who could bring the world to revere a cross, He Who held up suffering humanity and persecuted virtue as an object of veneration to mankind, He, we insist, can be no other than a God ” (“ Genius of Christianity,” part iv., book iii.).

But let us open the Gospel again. “ Consider the lilies of the field how they grow ; they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these. Suffer little children to come to Me and

forbid them not. Whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. Love your neighbour as yourself. Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. Fear ye not them that kill the body. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow Me." What a singular philosophy ! What a strange code of morality ! What an overthrow of all received notions ! The Pharisees and other Saints of the Jews are but hypocrites. All men are equal before God. There is no more distinction between rich and poor, master and slave. Love of our enemies, forgiveness of offences, self-denial, crushing of the passions, purity, charity, meekness, penance, humility—all these celestial virtues must now replace the vices of paganism. Men must be faithful to duty, even unto death. They must carry to a sublime extravagance the love of God and of their fellows—and all this for a reward to be obtained beyond the grave ! It all seems like a dream, or rather it is a repetition of what took place at the beginning of time, when God said, " Let light be made, and light was made," and every element in Nature emerging from chaos and darkness took its place in the harmony of the universe ; the waters filled the deep ; the earth was covered with flowers and fruits ; the mountains threw up their summits

in the sky ; and the stars rolled in the firmament. So likewise, at the word of Christ, the moral world emerged from darkness, and men began to behold splendours never witnessed before.

III.—THE PARABLES OF THE GOSPEL.

Jesus rendered His teaching popular, and brought it home to every heart and soul by His powerful parables. In order to regenerate man and recall him to virtue, it was necessary to make him realize the state of degradation to which he had been reduced by sin ; to impress on his mind the excellence and inestimable worth of Divine grace ; to show God in the light of a loving Father, and to insist on His infinite goodness and mercy ; to exalt the Christian Law above the law of fear ; to crush and stigmatize arrogance and pride ; to raise the humble and the poor to a sense of their dignity ; and to inculcate the momentous value of the present life and its bearing on our eternal destiny. Jesus achieved all this by His parables.

I. *The Sower.*

The Parable of the Sower was delivered in one of the most picturesque and charming resorts of Galilee. Great multitudes had followed the Saviour to the shores of the Lake of Genesareth some captivated by the spell of His fascinating personality, some in the hope of seeing a miracle, some through curiosity, and others through a sincere desire of amending their lives. From the boat which He had entered, in order to deliver His instructions, His eye could sweep over the magnificent landscape

before Him. On the slopes of the hills He could distinguish the yellow harvest fields. Here and there tracks were visible across the fields. In some places there were rocks and cliffs and patches of stony ground, or clumps of briars and thorns. On the shore before Him was a forest of human beings—men, women, and children. Every age, sex, and condition was represented there—Pagans and Jews, rich and poor, friends and enemies, hardened sinners and tepid souls, prodigal sons as well as pure and spotless maidens. They were all there facing Him. The two extremes were present—the Creator and His creatures ; the good Shepherd and His sheep ; purity and sin. There was not one in that crowd whose thoughts and conscience He did not read. He knew the whole history of their individual lives, their past and their future, their eternal lot with the elect or with the damned. “ The sower,” He said, “ went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock . . . and withered away. . . . And other some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it choked it. And other some fell upon good ground and yielded fruit a hundredfold ” (Luke viii. 5 *et seq.*). The Sower is the Son of God Himself, Who came from the splendour of His eternity, in order to scatter the seed of His Gospel and lavish His grace on the children of men. The Divine seed falls everywhere ; in abundance, and will fall till the end of time ; but alas ! it does not always meet the same soil. There is the wayside Christian, whose eyes and ears and heart are open to all the tempta-

tions and allurements of the world. Swarms of devils, those birds of the air, come and take away the good seed. There is the superficial Christian, the sluggard who willet and willet not, the half-Christian who wishes to serve two masters. In vain does the good seed labour to strike root in his heart ; the soil is too shallow, there is no moisture. The third class regards those Christians who are all absorbed by earthly cares, bent on worldly concerns, plunged in fashionable vices and hence neglect the one thing necessary. They toil and labour to amass riches, to enjoy the good things of this world, but they seldom give a thought to their immortal souls. Fools ! The first man sold his soul to satisfy an empty craving ; how many Christians sell and lose it for pleasure ? Finally, there is the good and rich soil which repays the great Sower for all His toils, the soil which yields the hundredfold, the true and sincere Christian who has not received the grace of God in vain, and who treasures up incalculable riches for the harvest of eternity.

2. *The Good Samaritan.*

This parable gives us a vivid picture of the miserable condition of the human race before the coming of Christ. The unfortunate man who fell among robbers, and was despoiled, wounded, and left half dead, is a touching figure of our fallen humanity robbed by the devil of original justice, stripped of the robe of innocence, despoiled of all supernatural gifts, and wounded in all its energies and faculties—in its mind, since it is exposed to error and doubt ; in its will, since it is weakened by the passions and

allured by all sorts of temptations ; and in its heart, since it is the receptacle of all vices. What a spectacle ! Man, the king of creation and the favourite of God, now destitute and helpless, degraded and debauched, worshipping monstrous deities, and utterly incapable of rising from his low estate ! Yet he was still breathing, life was not extinct, he was not lost beyond redemption. But his cure could not be effected by the priests and Levites of the Old Covenant. It was necessary that the Son of the living God, the Good Samaritan, should come from Heaven to save him from eternal ruin. The Samaritans were strangers to the Jews, who hated and persecuted them. In like manner we were the enemies of the great God, transgressing His Divine Law and blaspheming His holy Name. And yet His Divine Son stooped down to our misery and helplessness. Moved with compassion at the sight of our fallen condition, He dressed our wounds with the wine of His precious blood and the unction of His grace, bound them up with the saving bands of the New Dispensation, and having brought us into His Church, He confided us to the care of His Priesthood. When the Redeemer had thus completed our salvation, He left the world and returned to His Father. But at the end of time He will come back again to crown the merciful and reward the just.

3. *The Labourers in the Vineyard.*

In this parable the Divine Teacher discloses to His astonished hearers the favourable circumstances under which the children of the Church can work

out their salvation. A householder went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. He went again at the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours, and finding other labourers standing idle in the market-place, he sent them also to his vineyard. When evening was come, he called his steward, and told him to settle the accounts and pay the same wage to those who had worked only an hour as to those who had "borne the burden of the day and the heats." The householder is God Himself, Who wishes all men to serve Him and work out their salvation. The market-place is the world; the vineyard the service of God; the day's hire eternal life. The steward is the Son of Man, Who, on the last day, will settle all accounts. The different hours of the day are the different periods of the world's existence, the eleventh or last hour representing the Christian times. The Patriarchs were called first, but they had not the same opportunities as the labourers of the last hour, who have the grace of the sacraments, and who can, in a short time, acquire a brighter crown than the Saints of the Old Covenant.

4. *The Prodigal Son.*

In order to save men from the grasp of the Devil and recall them to the practice of virtue, it was necessary to inspire them with unlimited confidence in the goodness of God. They had been estranged from Him by the primitive Fall, and considered Him in the light of a Judge always ready to punish. The mere thought of His unquestionable rights and of His infinite justice filled them with dread and

terror. This feeling had to be dispelled, otherwise the race could not be saved. The Parable of the Prodigal Son has done more to restore confidence and love than all the sighs and prayers of the Patriarchs and Prophets. A father had two sons, and the younger of the two, tired of paternal check and control, and dreaming of a brilliant life away from his father's house, demanded the portion of his inheritance, and went away into a far-off land. He feared that by remaining in the neighbourhood of his childhood's happy home the memories of early joys and the remembrance of the many kindnesses he had received might interfere with his excesses. Poor young man ! He will soon learn by his sad experience the terrible consequences of his folly. In a few months all his resources were exhausted, and he was soon reduced to destitution and misery. Oh, what a change in his condition ! He is now a slave, a degraded being, and he feeds on the husks of swine. How he remembers the happy days of his innocence and all the dear ones whose hearts he has broken ! How he regrets the sweet and pure joys of home ! At length he resolves to rise from his degradation, and return to his father. " When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and was moved to compassion, and ran to him, and fell on his neck and kissed him." An ordinary father would, no doubt, have checked his own feelings ; he would have waited for the prodigal and left him at his feet till he had implored forgiveness and mercy. But how different is the father of the parable ! He runs to welcome the wanderer and presses him to his heart. Not satisfied with this, he restores to

him all his rights and privileges. Not a word of reproach, not the least allusion to the past. All is forgiven, all is forgotten. Our Divine Master could not describe more admirably the infinite goodness of our Heavenly Father and the profound misery of the poor sinner. Anyone reading this page of the Gospel will readily admit that the sin of despair is a sin of stupidity.

5. *The Lost Sheep.*

The Parable of the Good Shepherd who runs after the strayed sheep is another touching and beautiful illustration of the unbounded tenderness and mercy of God. The lost sheep is the human soul disfigured by sin and wandering from the path of virtue. The Divine Shepherd knows the price of that soul. The creation of the world cost Him only one word, but for the salvation of the human soul He had to shed all the drops of His precious blood. A soul is to Him as a breath of His own life, the end of all His works, the companion of His eternity. No wonder, then, that He should run after it and bring it back to the fold.

6. *Dives and Lazarus.*

The Redeemer's design in the Parable of Dives and Lazarus was to teach us the price of patient and resigned poverty and the awful danger of riches. There are two tableaux in this sublime picture, one which concerns the present life, and the other which refers to the next. In the first we see a rich man, robed in purple and fine linen, sitting at a sumptuous table and enjoying life, whilst a

poor beggar, called Lazarus, lies at his gate, covered with sores, and, in his distress, wishes to allay his hunger with the scraps that fall from the rich man's table. But no one gives him anything. The dogs prowling about the place come and lick his sores. In the second tableau the scene is very different. Lazarus is in Heaven, surrounded with glory and enjoying an eternal happiness, whilst the rich man is buried in Hell and overwhelmed with misery. In his agony Dives craves for a drop of water to refresh his burning tongue, but that consolation is refused him. We see from this that in the next world all seeming disorders will be adjusted. God does not, like men, judge from appearances ; He considers the heart. He is not fascinated, as we are, by whatever shines and glitters ; He judges according to right and truth. A man of naught in the eyes of the world, a man of toil, a poor mendicant, may be dearer to Him a thousand times than a rich glutton all covered with silk and gold. How important it was for the Saviour to impress on the minds of Jews and heathens this noble doctrine that the poor, the needy, the slaves, are the special favourites of God ! Lazarus was despised and rejected by the world ; he was covered with rags and consumed by hunger and pain. Dives was esteemed, honoured, flattered, and exalted. All his cravings and caprices were satisfied to the full. He was a brilliant Epicurean, he led a pleasant and, to all appearances, honourable life, but his heart was closed against the poor, and he did not trouble himself about religion or the next life. Days and weeks and years passed away, but eventually

the end came for both, the judgment followed. And now how different is their destiny ! When the rich glutton entered into the abode of the damned, he saw and read on the gate of Hell the famous inscription :

“ All hope abandon ye who enter here ;
Through me you pass into the city of woe,
Through me you pass into eternal fear.”
DANTE.

But Lazarus is now a child of God and a prince of Heaven ; he is crowned with a diadem of inexpressible brightness, and his happiness and glory will have no end.

7. *The Pharisee and the Publican.*

There is no vice more hateful to God than pride. Pride is a subtle poison which insinuates itself into the soul and corrupts its best actions ; it is a monster which tends to dethrone God by stealing His glory. It caused the ruin of the bad Angels and occasioned the fall of our first parents and the whole human race. Our Lord branded and stigmatized it in a special manner, because it was the great sin of the old world. The Pharisees were its faithful personification. Formalists in religion, they considered themselves as ideal specimens of humanity. They hated the publicans, or tax-gatherers, and looked upon them as sordid fellows, unclean and excommunicate. They posed before the public, and performed their actions to be seen by men. They frequented the market-place, enlarging their fringes and making a show of their well-draped persons. They prayed at the corner of the streets,

and when giving alms they sounded a trumpet before them. Their self-assertiveness and conceit, their foppish ways and haughty arrogance, were so revolting to Our Lord that He called them "whited sepulchres," "full of dead men's bones and filthiness," "brood of vipers," "hypocrites straining at gnats and swallowing camels, shutting against others the gates of Heaven which they themselves did not enter." We understand from this how necessary it was to teach them a lesson of humility. Hence the importance of the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican. The Pharisee, after having made his way along the marble pavement, stopped in front of the Holy of Holies. There he struck an attitude, and standing upright and self-conscious, he raised his voice and thanked God that he was not like the rest of men. He fasted twice a week, and gave tithes of all he possessed. But the Publican, standing afar off, in the Court of the Gentiles, behind the other worshippers, struck his breast, saying: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Our Lord says that the Publican went down to his house justified. The Pharisee, on the contrary, had added a new sin to his former iniquity; his prayer was a sham supremely hateful to God.

8. *The Talents and the Ten Virgins.*

In order to impress upon the minds of all generations the importance of making a good use of the grace of God, and of availing ourselves of the present life to secure our salvation, the Divine

Teacher delivered the Parable of the Talents and the Ten Virgins.

A man having to go into a distant land entrusted his goods to the care of his servants. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. When he returned from his journey, he demanded of them a strict account of their administration. The first two had made good use of their master's property: they had doubled its value; whilst the third had hidden his treasure and wasted his time in idleness. He was therefore deprived of the talent that had been given him and cast into "exterior darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth." The master is evidently Our Lord Himself. The talents are the gifts and graces which He left with us when He returned to His Father. They are the natural and supernatural goods bestowed on us by His mercy and love. Life, health, fortune, endowments of the mind, energies of the will, faith, grace, the sacraments. All these were given us to make a fortune for Heaven. They were not distributed equally to all. God owes us nothing; He is the master of His gifts, and He bestows them as He likes. But "unto whom much is given, of him much shall be required." At His return—that is, on the Day of Judgment—we shall be called upon to give an account of our stewardship. The faithful and loyal servants will receive "a good measure, and pressed down and shaken together." But the slothful and unprofitable servants shall be cast into eternal darkness.

This doctrine is beautifully exemplified in the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Among the Jews wed-

ding processions took place at night, by the light of lamps or torches. Ten virgins who were to take part in the procession prepared their lamps. Five took a provision of oil with them, the other five neglected to do so. Then they all fell asleep. Towards midnight the bridegroom came, and the virgins arose to meet him. But the five foolish virgins had no oil in their lamps. They went to procure some from the vendors; when they returned, the guests had entered into the marriage hall and the doors were closed. They were refused admittance, and the bridegroom said to them: "I know you not."

The marriage-feast is Heaven. The arrival of the bridegroom is the judgment. The wise virgins are the souls who watch and pray, and are ever ready to meet their judge. The foolish virgins are those whose faith is inactive, who pass their lives in careless neglect of duty. Death comes when it is not expected; it is too late then to repair the past. The scene closes, and the foolish souls are excluded from Heaven.

CHAPTER III

THE MIRACLE-WORKER

I.—GENERAL VIEW OF THE GOSPEL-MIRACLES.

ONE of the chief aims of the Modernists is to destroy or explain away the miracles of Jesus. They either deny the Gospel-wonders or try to find a natural explanation for them. It is very difficult to close with such adversaries. They are so fickle and versatile ; they shift their ground so often that you can never find them at the post where they challenge you. For them, truth is subjective, and faith is a question of feeling and sentiment. Hence their constituent character is unsteadiness, inconstancy, vagueness, and, like Proteus of old, they always escape the fatal blow by changing their form.

No man of good faith can deny that the facts related in the Gospel are true, real, incontrovertible. The historical veracity of these facts has been established, time after time, with a clearness and precision that leave no room for doubt. We shall not insist on this point ; nor do we intend to prove the possibility of miracles, as this question is one of common sense. The words of Jean Jacques Rousseau are well known : “ Can God perform miracles—that is, can He derogate from the laws which He has Himself

established? This question seriously proposed would be impious, if it were not absurd. To punish the man who would give it a negative answer would be to do him too much honour; he should simply be locked up in a mad-house."

During His short stay on earth, Jesus showed Himself the Lord and Master of creation; He appeared as having full control of the forces and the laws of Nature. Sufferers were brought to Him from all parts of the land, and He cured them. Sickness in every form and shape yielded to His word. The lame and the blind, the deaf and the mute, the paralytic and the leper, recovered the energy and soundness of their youth. Even the dead received a fresh gift of life. The number of those miracles is so great that St. John writes in His Gospel: "There are also many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written" (John xxi. 25). And those wonders were performed in different ways: sometimes through a secret virtue that went out from Him, sometimes by a word of His sacred lips, sometimes by the touch of His hand or of His garments, sometimes even at a distance, by a mere act of His will. Nor were these miracles confined to human beings. He also acted on the elements of inanimate nature, as when He multiplied the loaves in the desert or calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Likewise He asserted His power over the demons by expelling them from those who were under their evil influence. And all this was done in the light of day, not infrequently in the presence of

great multitudes, and in the face of His very enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, who sought every opportunity of watching and spying upon Him, in order to encompass His ruin.

II.—A MODERN THEORY ON THE GOSPEL-MIRACLES.

Infidelity has, at all times, devised means to explain away these wonderful facts. The ancient Jews asserted that Jesus was the agent of Beelzebub, or that He had stolen the unspeakable word from the sanctuary of the temple. Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian attributed His power to magic, saying that He had learnt the black art during His exile in Egypt. But some of our modern infidels beat the record ; they contend that the Gospel-miracles can be explained by hypnotism ! “ At the voice of the young Galilean,” they say, “ the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak. But in all these cases the sufferers are hysterical. Their infirmity is more in the mind and in the imagination than in the organs. Jesus possesses the magnetic power which we call hypnotism. By His voice, His gestures, the fascination of His looks, He acts on the nervous system, and the sufferers are cured.”

The first lesson which we may learn from this senseless theory is that men are very petty when they are ruled by passion or self-conceit. Who will tell us how Jesus learnt the secrets of hypnotism ? He lived nineteen hundred years ago, at a time when medical science was practically unknown, and He spent His life in a workshop. How could He possibly learn the refinements of therapeutics, the mysteries of hypnotism, and all the other intricacies

of the art of healing ? How could He acquire a sure and infallible diagnosis, a scientific discrimination of the most complicated cases, when modern scientists, despite the experience of ages and the discoveries of the past, despite their long years of study, their protracted researches, and their improved methods, are still uncertain of their way, and are groping in the dark ? To imagine that Jesus could, without teachers, without leisure, without study, have acquired this wonderful knowledge, would be a miracle of the first order, far more incredible than the Gospel-wonders.

But is it true that the miracles of the New Testament can be explained by hysteria and hypnotism ? To ask this question is to solve it. The symptoms of hysteria are well known, and we do not see them in the sufferers of the Gospel. We do not see that sense of suffocation, that convulsive struggling, that loss of control, those fits of laughing and crying, those ups and downs of melancholy and mirth. Besides, hypnotic cures require preparation ; the subject must be apt and predisposed ; special conditions are to be observed ; the presence of the hypnotizer is required, at least in the beginning ; the cure is only gradually effected, and it is not permanent. The Gospel-cures, on the contrary, were instantaneous and complete, irrespective of persons, conditions, and distances. Take, for instance, the case of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda. This man, who had been sick thirty-eight years, was lying on his pallet utterly destitute and powerless. Our Lord simply said to him : " Arise, take up thy bed and walk." And immediately he arose, took up his

bed, and walked. To say that the Saviour, on this occasion, played the part of a quack or of a vulgar hypnotizer is more than a man of common sense can bear ; it is a manifest absurdity. The paralytic had never met nor seen Him before. Not only did he not suspect that Jesus had a healing power, but, even after his cure, he did not know who He was.

What could we not say of the cure of the deaf and dumb, of the man who was born blind, and especially of the ten lepers ? Leprosy is one of the most obstinate diseases that may affect the human frame. It poisons the blood, eats the flesh, and sends its roots deep into all the fibres and sinews of a weak and decayed organism. Now, to dispel it by one word and to restore the flesh in an instant to its original freshness, is evidently a work beyond the reach of man, and consequently beyond the power of hypnotism. But what about the dead who were raised to life again ? What about the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Naim, and Lazarus, the friend of Jesus ? How could a mesmerist, with his passes and performances, restore life to an extinct body or a putrid corpse ?

But that is not all. Our Lord performed miracles on the mute and lifeless elements of inferior nature, and therefore on beings that could not be affected by hysteria and hypnotism. He changed the water into wine at the marriage-feast, multiplied bread in the desert, restored tranquillity to the troubled sea, and walked on the waves. Let the celebrated infidels of the present day try the same or similar experiments. Will they succeed ?

III.—ANOTHER THEORY.

The most grave and thoughtful amongst the enemies of Christianity fully realize the weakness and insanity of the preceding theory, but when they have to speak for themselves they have recourse to another theory which is perhaps more ingenious, but not less ridiculous. They say that the miracles of the Gospel are not proved scientifically. There is a lack of verification, a want of scientific inquiry : there are no certificates signed in due form, no authentic security, no guarantee of truth. Hence the facts are not to be taken into account ; they can no more be the object of belief than of disbelief ; they are not worthy of attention, and must be ignored altogether.

The world had to wait nineteen centuries for the invention of this fantastic folly. Truly our age is an age of enlightenment and progress ! Men are so much inclined to mistrust their fellows that they want certificates for everything, and the Son of God has to submit to this inevitable law. He has no right to perform miracles without consulting physicians, surgeons, chemists, physiologists, meteorologists, and connoisseurs, as the case may be. A jury must be summoned to examine and pronounce, and He must submit to its decision. If charity did not prompt us to pity the abettors of such extravagant fooleries, we would enjoy the comical aspect of the theory. But let us practise patience and listen once more to infidel sophistry. We are told that the Gospel-miracles were performed in the presence of incompetent witnesses,

utterly ignorant of the laws of Nature and of the first principles of medical or surgical sciences, and therefore utterly incapable of pronouncing on the miraculous character of the facts. We reply that any man with ordinary common sense can see at a glance the fallacy of this singular utterance, just as the same man, whether he be a labourer or a fisherman, a smith or a cobbler, can verify the truth of a miracle. He has but to open his eyes or his ears ; and any man can do this. Let us reason : Suppose a leper whose flesh falls away piecemeal, and exhales an intolerable stench ; or a blind man who never saw the light of day, for the simple reason that he was born without the visual organs ; or a paralytic whose legs are torn and crippled. You can see their misery and hear their cry of distress. The Master comes and says one word, and at once the leper is cleansed, the blind man sees, the paralytic walks. These facts are plain, obvious, palpable, and the man who says that you cannot be certain of them without being a disciple of Æsculapius, and an expert in the healing art or in surgery—that man, I say, is evidently deranged.

Again, suppose that a man whom you knew well was attacked by a fatal sickness, that he struggled for a while, but finally died, and was buried. It is now four days since he was carried to his last resting-place. His body is already a prey to corruption, and exhales a horrible smell. You may not be a *savant*, but you are absolutely certain of one thing—namely, that the man is dead. A crowd of sympathizers has come to condole with the sisters and relations of the deceased friend. And lo ! in the

midst of the general consternation a voice is heard : " Lazarus, come forth !" O wonder ! the dead man rises from his tomb ; he recovers the vigour and freshness of life ; he walks, speaks, eats, and drinks. This fact is wonderful, no doubt, yet it is simple, manifest, and easily perceived. All you require to make sure of it is half a grain of mental sanity.

Let us now turn to another scene. Suppose that you are in a little barque, tossed on the sea. A storm is raging, and you try, but in vain, to reach the shore. The waves are high and wild, and the little barque will inevitably be lost. Suddenly a voice, piercing the gloom, commands the wind and the sea, and the next moment tranquillity is restored, and there is a great calm. Now, I maintain that you can, in all truth, testify to the truth of these facts without being an adept in meteorological sciences.

Finally, suppose that you are in a desert with a multitude of five thousand men, without counting the women and children. The night falls, and there is no other food for this immense multitude but five barley loaves and two fishes. A man raises his hand and blesses this scanty supply, and then distributes it amongst the thousands, and, behold ! they all eat and are satisfied, and after the meal twelve baskets are filled with the fragments that remain. I am sure that you can judge of this fact as well as a scientist or a baker, and that you can assert, without fear of contradiction, that this prodigy is beyond the forces of Nature.

IV.—A THIRD AND LAST THEORY.

Our adversaries insist. They say that Our Lord did not perform His miracles openly, but before a few chosen persons whose testimony is very suspicious. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that this absurd assumption is true, and that Jesus wrought His wonders in secret. Does it follow that we must reject them? No, evidently! If the witnesses are worthy of credence, why should their testimony be discarded? The Apostles witnessed all the miracles of their Master, and they published them everywhere after His death, without any other profit to themselves but persecution, prison, and death. "I readily believe witnesses who allow themselves to be put to death for what they testify," says Pascal.

But is it true that the Saviour shunned the light? Anyone reading the Gospel will be convinced that this assertion has not even the appearance of truth. Let us take a few examples. It was in the presence of a great multitude that the leper was cured, after the Sermon on the Mount. When Jesus "was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him; and behold a leper came and adored Him, saying: Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, stretching forth His hand, touched Him, saying: I will, be thou made clean. And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed" (Matt. viii.). It was in the presence of a great multitude that the blind beggar of Jericho recovered his sight. This unfortunate man, hearing the noise of the crowd that accompanied Our Lord, cried out:

“ Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me ! ” Those who headed the procession rebuked him, and told him not to disturb the Master ; but it was his only chance, Jesus might never pass that way again, and therefore he cried out much more : “ Son of David, have pity on me ! ” His prayer was heard, and he was cured (Luke xviii.). It was in the presence of a great multitude that the son of the widow of Naim was restored to life. On that occasion the crowd exclaimed in their enthusiasm : “ A great prophet is risen up among us, and God has visited His people ” (Luke vii.). It was in the presence of five thousand men that the loaves were multiplied in the desert. St. Matthew, who relates the fact, says : “ There came to Him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others, and they cast them down at His feet, and He healed them, so that the multitudes marvelled, seeing the dumb speak, the lame walk, the blind see ; and they glorified the God of Israel ” (Matt. xv. 31). It was in the presence of a great multitude that He raised Lazarus from the dead. This miracle was so striking, so conspicuous, so public, that the Scribes and Pharisees, in their spleen, gathered a council, and said : “ What are we doing, for this man doth many miracles ? If we let Him alone so, all will believe in Him ” (John xi.).

These examples, which we could multiply, show eloquently that Our Lord did not hide His light under a bushel, but acted openly, and courted in every way investigation and research. If at times He recommended silence after performing a miracle, it was for two reasons principally : First, because He

had to be on His guard against the enthusiasm of His countrymen, who wished to make use of Him for their political aspirations. They were under the impression that the Messiah would found a temporal kingdom, and would deliver the Jews from the hated yoke of the Romans. They expected to recover their lost rights and liberties, and wished to create an agitation. At the time of the Saviour there was a terrible ferment of unrest, a revolutionary spirit, which might have easily caused a great conflagration. Any imprudent move on the part of Jesus would have been interpreted by His enemies as an attempt to reverse the existing order of things, and by His friends as the signal of their political emancipation. But He would not lend Himself to their dreams, because His mission was one of peace. He had determined, in His eternal counsel, to devote three years of His life to the preaching of His Gospel, and therefore during that time He had to follow the ordinary rules of prudence. Another reason why He counselled silence was that he wished to secure a little rest for Himself, away from the crowd. When those who had been cured published His miracles, great multitudes gathered round Him, pressing and following Him even to desert places, regardless of the very necessities of life. And yet His greatest delight was to taste the charm of solitude ! . We read that after the labours of the day, when every other tired labourer sought shelter and rest for the night, He ascended the mountain-side and retired into lonely spots, where He could spend the whole night in prayer and communion with God. Is it surprising, then, that at times He wished as little

noise to be made around His sacred person as was consistent with His Divine mission ?

Our adversaries are clamouring for inquiries and certificates ? The testimony of thousands of witnesses, the testimony of a whole people, overrules all their sophisms, and leaves no room for fallacy and nonsense. If we reject the Gospel-miracles, then we must say that the whole nation of the Jews was sick, hallucinated, demented ; that the Scribes and Pharisees, the Doctors and the priests, the common people, the enemies as well as the friends of Jesus—all, at the same time, were under the same hallucination, and became the victims of the same delusion and insanity. Our common sense evidently decides that the mere supposition of this fact is a perfect absurdity. If the miracles of Jesus are to be discarded, then we must reject all evidence, and conclude that no truth can be ascertained ; that we are in a world of shades and phantoms, where nothing can be known !

Infidels want inquiries and certificates ! They have them in the Gospel itself. Let them read the history of the man born blind, such as it is described by St. John (John ix.), and they will see there two inquiries in due form—one made by the neighbours of the sufferer, and the other by the Pharisees ; one popular, and the other formal. The neighbours and all those who had known the blind man said : “ Is not this he that sat and begged ? ” Some said : “ This is he.” But others said : “ No, but he is like him.” But he said : “ I am he.” And he had to explain to them how he had been cured : “ That man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my

eyes, and said to me : ' Go to the pool of Siloe and wash.' And I went and washed, and I see." They brought him to the Pharisees, and the formal inquiry began. He had to repeat his tale all over again. Then he was cross-examined concerning the details of the case. Not satisfied with his evidence, they called in witnesses. The parents of the man had to undergo a strict examination : " Is this your son, who you say was born blind ? How then doth he now see ?" His parents answered them, and said : " We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind ; but how he now seeth, we know not . . . ask him ; he is of age, let him speak for himself." The man had to appear again and answer new questions about the personality and character of Jesus : " Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." He said to them : " If He be a sinner, I know not ; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. . . . Unless this man were of God, he could not do anything." The Pharisees could not stand this popular logic. He was therefore ejected from the synagogue and excommunicated. The trial ended there. In this beautiful and interesting page of the Gospel, we have a miracle of the first order, duly tested and certificated. Modern critics may apply the resources of their imagination to the revision of this process ; they will only show the narrowness of the circle in which they move, and the senselessness of their folly. The lucidity and clearness of the Gospel narrative is unassailable. The Apostles who relate the wonders of the New Testament mention the details and circumstances of every case ; they name the persons

and places, and give all the particulars that may help to investigate and verify the facts. They write and speak with a precision that is always accompanied with the greatest publicity : " Ye men of Israel, hear these words : Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you also know " (Acts ii. 22).

V.—THE MIRACLES OF JESUS PROVE HIS DIVINITY.

Before proceeding any farther, and before we discuss the greatest of all miracles—the miracle of the Resurrection—let us pause awhile and reflect. A miracle comes evidently from God, because God alone, Who established the laws of Nature, has the right to derogate from them. But in thus derogating from His laws, He may, and He does often, make use of instruments. Moses, Elias, Eliseus, the Prophets, the Apostles, and many others, were all miracle-workers and agents of God's almighty power. However, if we compare their wonderful works with those of Jesus, we see at once between them a vast, an essential difference. While the other Thaumaturgists call themselves the servants and the messengers of God, Jesus insists on His Divinity ; He assumes and professes to be the Christ, the Son of the living God ; He claims a Divine origin, and thinks it not robbery to be equal to God. And He performs His miracles to prove His character and His mission. " The works that I do . . . give testimony of Me " (John x. 25). Therefore He is what He says, because God cannot confirm by

prodigies and wonders the mission of an imposter and a deceiver.

More than this. The other miracle-workers never pretend to act in their own name, but in the name of God or in that of Jesus. They invoke the Divine mercy, and ask for help and assistance, acknowledging that their wonderful power is a borrowed and gratuitous gift which they have received from the sheer liberality of God. We see the Apostles invoking the name of their Master, and referring all praise and glory to Him : " In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk " (Acts iii. 6). Our Lord, on the contrary, does not act as a delegate or a substitute, but as the supreme Lord of creation. For Him, the gift of miracles is not a borrowed gift, but something essentially his own. To the leper He says : " I will, be thou made clean " (Matt. viii. 3). To the two blind men who invoke His mercy and solicit His pity, He says : " Do you believe that I can do this unto you ? " (Matt. ix. 28). To the son of the widow of Naim : " Young man, I say to thee, arise " (Luke vii. 14). And in all this there is no hesitation, no wonder, no surprise ; all is plain, simple, natural.

Amongst other miracles, that of the Resurrection deserves special attention, because it has always been considered as the central point, the hinge, on which Christianity revolves. There is, indeed, a great difference between the tomb of Christ and that of the greatest of men. On the splendid monuments erected to the memory of the heroes of the world there is an inscription : " Here lies ——. Under this stone lies one who was once a man."

But any inscription on the tomb of Christ should read : " He is risen, He is not here." The Resurrection is an irrefragable demonstration of the Divine mission of Jesus—a demonstration which everyone can understand, because it is suited as well to the intelligence of the simple as to that of the learned. Our Lord says to the Jews : " I have the power to lay down My life, and I have the power to take it up again " (John x. 18). Now, it must be manifest to all that if He has this power, if He can raise Himself up from the dead, He is the Lord of life and death—that is, God. During three years, He proclaims His Divinity, and proves it by His works ; the Jews refuse to believe. He appeals to His Resurrection : " Destroy this body, and in three days I will raise it up " (John ii. 19). That is the great sign, the great mark that He is what He says. The Jews accepted the challenge, and subjected Him to an ignominious death. When they sealed the stone which covered His grave, they boasted that the man and the sect were crushed and buried for ever. But what a withering rebuke did they not receive on the morning of the Resurrection ! Whilst they are exulting in their infernal triumph, the Son of God comes out of His grave glorious and triumphant ! This prodigy is so astounding, so convincing, that it is the seal of the Christian faith. The enemies of Christianity understand this, and therefore they try every means in their power to destroy or obscure its incomparable brightness, but all in vain. The proofs and evidences of the Resurrection are so forcible, so irresistible, that there is no escape for infidelity. Two facts clearer and brighter than the light of day sum

up the whole case : (1) Jesus died on Good Friday ; (2) He was seen alive on Easter Sunday.

Jesus died on Good Friday. Not one of His contemporaries, whether Jew or Roman, Scribe or Pharisee, friend or foe, ever entertained the least doubt about this fact. His death was officially confirmed and certified both by the Roman soldiers, who did not break His bones, because He was already dead, and by the centurion who had presided at His execution, and who declared before Pilate that life was extinct. Besides, one of the soldiers, for the sake of precaution, pierced His side and His heart. Finally, the enormous quantity of spices with which the body was saturated by Nicodemus (about one hundred pounds weight) was more than sufficient to cause death by suffocation. The body itself was bound and fastened by long bands of linen cloth or cotton, overlaid and twisted in every way, covering even the face and the respiratory organs. The death of the Saviour, then, is unquestionable.

The second fact, which is as certain as the first, is that He was seen alive the third day after His death. Early in the morning of Easter Sunday an earthquake shook the very foundations of the earth, and ushered in the great event of the Resurrection ; the sepulchres flew open, and many bodies of the Saints that had slept arose, and, coming out of the tombs, appeared to many in Jerusalem (Matt. xxvii. 53). An Angel of the Lord, descending from Heaven, rolled back the stone which covered the sepulchre. The Saviour was no longer there. He had already risen from His grave. The soldiers who guarded the sepulchre were so struck with terror that they

became like dead men. Having recovered from their fright, they fled to Jerusalem. What a grand spectacle ! and what a contrast with the gloom of the preceding days !

The disciples who were witnesses to the Resurrection, and who shed their blood in testimony of it, far from being credulous, were of a sceptical and independent turn of mind. St. Thomas protested that he would not believe if he did not touch with his hands the wounds of the Saviour—a manifest evidence that the Apostles were not the sport of credulity and hallucination. On the other hand, no man of sound mind could, for a moment, harbour the thought that they all conspired against the human race to invent the tale of the Resurrection. Twelve fishermen could neither conceive nor execute such a mighty project. They were not imposters, nor infidels, nor philosophers. Besides, what could they expect from their execrable conspiracy ? Nothing but misery, persecution, prison, and death in this world ; and in the next, everlasting punishment ; because, if there be a just God, the Avenger of crime, He will surely crush with His eternal vengeance the abettors of such an abominable design.

No fact, then, is better proved than that of the Resurrection. The purest flowers of humanity have borne testimony to this great miracle. The most enlightened minds of all times and places have confessed it ; millions of martyrs have sealed it with their blood. Christ is risen again ! Therefore He is the Son of the living God, and He must be believed.

During the stormy days of the French Revolution infidel statesmen wished to destroy the old religion,

and substitute in its place some fashionable and up-to-date worship, but they soon found out that the task was beyond their power. They complained bitterly to one of the chief revolutionaries of the time. "Well," replied the latter, "I will give you good advice on this head. Have yourself killed on Friday, let them bury you on Saturday, try your best to rise again on Sunday, and, take my word for it, people will believe in your religion."

CHAPTER IV

THE PROPHET

I.—THE GIFT OF PROPHECY.

A PROPHECY is the prediction of some future event which cannot be known from natural causes, because it has no necessary connection with anything already existing. The predictions of astronomers announcing the revolutions and movements of the celestial bodies, or the disturbances of Nature, are not real prophecies, no more than the previsions of statesmen concerning political changes, because these events can be known in their causes. But the facts predicted by a prophet are of a different kind. Their cause is not determined ; it is not subject to inflexible laws, but enjoys the most absolute independence and the most perfect liberty. Hence no creature in the world, not even the brightest Angel, can know these facts. God alone sees them in His infinite foreknowledge, and God alone can reveal them. It follows from this that a prophecy has always, like a miracle, a Divine origin. It is a revelation supplying its own demonstration—a revelation because it contains what can only be known to God ; and it supplies its own demonstration because it is miraculous. When fulfilled, it is a certain and

unassailable proof of the doctrine in favour of which it was made, and its convincing power necessarily brings conviction to the mind. To be a prophet, then, is to be the agent and the messenger of God. The pagans themselves acknowledged this; they acknowledged that the power of announcing future events is a Divine power: "Where there is divining there are gods!" exclaims Cicero; "and where there are gods there is divining." How forcibly these words remind us of the text of Isaias: "Show the things that are to come hereafter, and we shall know that ye are gods" (Isa. xli. 23).

By His human intelligence, Our Lord did not, and could not, know all possibilities, but He knew all events and realities, past, present, and future; and therefore the whole history of the world from the beginning of time till the final consummation was clear and manifest to Him, as well as the private histories of those millions upon millions of human beings whom the fruitful ages will bring into existence. The gift of prophecy was natural and congenial to Him; it was the consequence of the hypostatic union, the legitimate appanage of His deified humanity. We see clearly from the Gospel that the secrets of the future were unveiled to His mind. In His discourses and parables He incessantly refers and alludes to the most distant events. Evidently His powerful intelligence, all ablaze with light, perceives at a glance the mysteries of the ages to come, the catastrophes of Nature, the revolutions of empires, the very thoughts and actions of the unborn generations. He connects together the past, the present, and the future, and associates the living

with the dead. The visions of the other prophets are transitory and short-lived. The magnificent spectacles which are presented to the eyes are veiled in mysterious figures and obscure enigmas. Their light is borrowed, and it soon vanishes away to leave them in the dark. Not so with Jesus. He basks in an ocean of splendour. Independent of space and time, His mind soars above the narrow limits of His age, and embraces the origin and destiny of man and the universe. He never ceases to be under the influence of the Divine spirit, and he sees all events in their living reality, in their cause, their development, their full expansion, and their remotest consequences. We poor creatures are limited and circumscribed in every way. Our short-sightedness is our most striking characteristic. Placed on a single point of time and space, we cast a furtive glance at the landscape around us. Our incomplete view, still biassed and obscured by our passions and prejudices, gives us only a faint and confused idea of the scene. Then we close our eyes for ever, and go the way of all flesh. We touch only one link of the chain of ages. Like actors on the stage, we play our part, and disappear. Others have played before us, and others will continue to play after us. During our short stay on earth we are struck by what we do, and see, and hear ; but its connection with the past and the future is unknown to us, and because God's eternal patience does not keep pace with our whims and caprices, we rebel against His Providence. We resemble those insects which move and bustle about, thinking that the whole world will come to an end, because a drop of

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water has penetrated their abode. Our Lord, on the contrary, remains calm and undisturbed, amidst the storms and commotions of human events, because, as He knows the origin of all things, He knows also their end and consummation. Not only does he sow and plant, but He measures the yield and return which He will receive at the time of the harvest.

His prophecies are almost innumerable, and their force of conviction is truly overwhelming.

II.—PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE SAVIOUR HIMSELF, HIS DISCIPLES, AND HIS CHURCH.

Concerning Himself, Jesus announced His Passion, Death, and Resurrection: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified, and the third day He shall rise again" (Matt. xx. 18). "As Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights; so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (Matt. xii. 40). The Jews who had heard these prophecies understood them so well that after the death of the Saviour they came to Pilate, saying: "Sir, we have remembered that that Seducer said while He was yet alive: After three days I will rise again" (Matt. xxvii. 63).

Concerning His disciples, Jesus predicted several events, amongst others the threefold denial of St. Peter: "Amen, I say to thee, to-day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt

deny Me thrice " (Mark xiv. 30). He foretold the betrayal of Judas : " Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you shall betray Me " (John xiii. 21). He announced the coming of the Holy Ghost and the terrible persecutions which were to assail His followers : " You shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence " (Acts i. 5). " They will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors, and before Kings for My sake. . . . The brother also shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the son : and the children shall rise up against their parents, and shall put them to death. And you shall be hated by all men for My Name's sake " (Matt. x. 17 *et seq.*). He mentioned the extraordinary signs and wonders which were to be effected by His disciples : " These signs shall follow them that believe. In My Name they shall cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues. . . . They shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover " (Mark xvi. 17 *et seq.*).

Concerning His Church, He announced that it would be founded upon Peter as upon an immovable rock, against which the gates of Hell would never prevail, and consequently that it would never fall away from the truth, and never need reform in its teaching (Matt. xvi. 18). He pledged His immortal word that He would never leave His Church, not even one day, till the end of time : " Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world " (Matt. xxviii. 20) ; that the faith of the supreme Pastor would always remain pure : " Simon . . . I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not "

(Luke xxii. 32) ; that He would ratify in Heaven the decisions of His Vicar on earth : " Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven " (Matt. xvi. 19) ; that the Church would extend to all nations and peoples : " You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth " (Acts i. 8). " Going therefore, teach ye all nations " (Matt. xxviii. 19).

Many of the Gospel parables have reference to the Church. We can easily see their prophetic meaning, and, beyond the letter, read the vision of the Great Seer. The Parable of the Mustard-seed, for instance, is a true picture of the origin and growth of the Church. " The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which is the least indeed of all seeds ; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof " (Matt. xiii. 31). When the Church was summed up in the Infant of the crib, or in the twelve fishermen of Galilee, it was indeed like the grain of mustard-seed. Its beginning was insignificant, worthless, contemptible. But it soon commenced to germinate and strike deep root, and finally it covered the whole world. All nations, and tribes, and peoples, are at ease under the shadow of its powerful branches.

The Parable of the Leaven is a beautiful illustration of the virtue of the Gospel. It shows how the doctrine of the New Law was to pervade and affect the masses, and change the hearts of men. The leaven

penetrates by its influence each particle of the meal, and soon modifies the whole mass, which becomes palatable and even pleasing to the taste. In like manner, the Gospel was to insinuate itself into the very heart of humanity, pervading individuals and nations until the world, purified and regenerated, became acceptable to God.

The Parable of the Good Seed and the Cockle gives us an admirable insight into the future condition of the Church. The husbandman and his servants sowed the good seed in a rich and fertile field, but the enemy came during the night and sowed the cockle, while the servants were asleep. We see here two armies—the army of Jesus Christ and the army of the Devil. On the one side, Our Lord and His followers, the Apostles, the Saints, the Martyrs, the Virgins, all spreading the good seed ; on the other, Lucifer and his imps, the false prophets and heresiarchs, the teachers and doctors of wickedness, all bent upon their work of iniquity. Christ will not destroy the cockle before the harvest ; He will let it grow with the wheat. There will be good and bad Christians in the Church ; the just and the unjust will often meet on the road of life. But on the last day, the day of the harvest, the Angels will separate them ; the good will be reserved for the storehouses of God ; the wicked will be cast into unquenchable fire.

The miraculous draught of fishes is another prophetic illustration of the Church. Our Lord entered one day into the barque of Peter, on the Lake of Genesareth, and, seating Himself, taught the multitude on the shore. Then He said to His future

Vicar : " Launch out into the deep, and let down your net for a draught." Peter did so, and he caught so great a multitude of fish that the net broke, and the boat was in danger of sinking. Every detail of this charming scene points to the conversion of souls through the Gospel. The lake is the world ; the barque of Peter from which Christ teaches is the Church ; the steersman is the Prince of the Apostles and his successors ; the quantity of fish prefigures the souls of men ; the danger of sinking represents the persecutions and trials of the faithful, whilst the rent in the net and the loss of fish symbolize the loss and ruin of souls through heresy and schism.

The very miracles and actions of Our Lord announce and foreshadow His Church. Let us take an example from the storm on the Lake of Galilee. Jesus was once more in the barque of Peter with His Apostles, on the Sea of Galilee, and a great storm arose, so that they were in danger of being swallowed up by the waves. But Jesus was asleep, and did not seem to concern Himself about the danger that threatened the little craft. No doubt the Apostles struggled a long time against the fury of the elements before they dared to awaken their Master. At one time the tiny barque rose on the crest of the waves, at another it plunged into the very depth of the sea, with its sails all torn and flapping noisily, and in long shreds, against the face of the mariners. Finally, the planks cracked, and the raging sea, invading the frail vessel, threatened destruction. The disciples hesitated no longer ; they roused the sleeping Christ, and in their fright cried out to Him : " Lord, save us, we perish !"

Jesus looked round with a peaceful and serene countenance, and said to them, in a tone of gentle reproach : " Why are ye fearful, O ye men of little faith ?" Then, standing, He rebuked the wind, and commanded the sea, and there came a great calm.

This page is a living picture of the history of the Church. The barque of the Church is incessantly assailed by wild and furious storms. The successor of St. Peter is at the helm ; Jesus seems to be asleep ; and the bishops and priests and faithful who are in the good old ship, thinking that all is lost, cry out to Him : " Lord, save us, we perish !" But He rebukes the storm, and tranquillity is restored. When all seems to be lost, it is then that salvation is at hand. The Church comes out of all struggles, not only uninjured and unimpaired, but with a new lease of strength and life.

III.—PROPHECIES CONCERNING JUDAISM.

On several occasions, but especially towards the end of His life, Our Lord announced, in the most explicit manner, the abrogation of the Old Law and the rejection of the Jews. The barren fig-tree cursed by Him is a striking and truly terrible figure of the downfall and desolation of the Jewish Synagogue. A few days before His death the Saviour left Bethany, and started with His disciples on His way to Jerusalem, a distance of about three miles. It was in the morning, and He had tasted no food. Feeling the pangs of hunger, He noticed a fig-tree covered with leaves by the wayside, and, stepping nearer, looked for fruit on it, but found none. Then

He said : " May no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever ;" and from that moment the fig-tree began to wither away. The following morning He happened to pass the same way again with His Apostles, and the fig-tree was no more clad in green foliage, but parched and withered to the root. Peter was the first to notice it, and, turning to the Master, said : " Look yonder. The fig-tree which Thou didst curse is withered away."

This tree thus blighted by the curse of God has always been considered as a prophetic symbol of the Jewish Synagogue, rejected by Christ. During three long years Jesus had travelled over the whole land of Juda, like the Good Shepherd in search of the lost sheep. He had exhausted all solcitude and tenderness, longing and thirsting for those souls whom He had come to save and redeem. Towards the end of His life, He looks for the result of His labour, and finds nothing but fruitless foliage. Then His terrible justice strikes irremediably. Under His blighting curse Judaism agonizes and dies.

To complete this picture, He proposed an allegory which is neither less prophetical nor less terrible in its significance. He described one of those beautiful vineyards that were so plentiful in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The master of the house himself had planted it with his own hands. After having made a hedge to protect it against marauders and wild beasts, he built a tower from whose top a watchman kept guard night and day. A large basin hewn out of the rock received the streams of purple wine that came from the press. Everything had been done to make this vineyard perfect, complete, and truly

worthy of its master. Well might the householder exclaim : " What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it ? " (Isa. v. 4). This vineyard was evidently the Jewish nation so highly favoured by Heaven, the nation which God had, with jealous care, isolated from the Gentiles, and preserved from idolatry and the other evils which desolated the earth. But when the vintage season came, the master sent his servants, the prophets, to gather the fruits. The husbandmen ill-treated them, beating some and killing the others. Finally, the householder sent his own beloved son, saying : " Perchance when they see him they will have respect for him." But the wretched husbandmen, taking hold of him, dragged him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What a clear and lucid prophecy of the terrible tragedy which was to take place, three days later, outside the city walls, on Mount Calvary ! " When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come," continued Jesus, " what will he do to these husbandmen ? " The Jews, answering, pronounced their own condemnation. They said : " He will bring those evil men to an evil end, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruit in due season." This was verified to the letter by the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the calling of the Gentiles into the Church. Our Lord confirmed this sentence, saying : " The kingdom of Heaven shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof." After twenty centuries we are witnesses to the fulfilment of this prophetic announcement. The Jews have

been rejected and scattered to the four quarters of the globe, and the Gentiles, transformed by the Gospel, have been transferred from darkness into the brightness of the kingdom of God.

With what peace of mind, with what serenity of expression, Jesus announces these great events in the face of those Scribes and Pharisees who were to crucify Him after three days ! “ Manifestly He has an intuition of the world and of all history, of the obstacles, and of the struggles. He sees what is and what will be, with an immediate certainty, and a Divine peacefulness. Never has king surveyed his empire, nor general his field of battle, nor labourer his mead, as Jesus saw the globe, and on the globe the struggle of His forces. He is sure that His desires will be fulfilled ; He knows what He can do and what He will do. He sees it, He says it, He does it ” (Gratry, “ Les Sophistes ”).

IV.—PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND THE END OF THE WORLD.

On Palm Sunday, when Jesus was going to Jerusalem, amidst the acclamations of a grateful people, He stopped on the crest of Mount Olivet. From this point His glance could sweep right over the Holy City, which was, at the time, the wonder of the East. “ Girdled with towers and battlements, crowned with palaces, the brilliant town reached out to the east and to the west as if bent upon marshalling all her splendours before the beholder. In a southerly direction, especially when the sunlight would beat upon the white marbles and golden roofs of the Temple, the dazzled sight was unable to

endure such a blaze of fire " (Fouard, " The Christ," book vi., chap. i.). Looking down upon the beautiful city which was soon to witness His passion and death, Jesus wept, and said : " The days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee ; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone ; because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation " (Luke xix. 43).

Two days later, as Jesus was leaving the temple for the last time before His death, His disciples were admiring the splendid porticoes and other marvels of the sacred edifice. Everything was delightful in this magnificent building—the colonnades, the mosaics, and especially the terraces of white marble. One of the disciples, turning to the Saviour, said : " Master, see ! look at these stones—what a structure ! " Jesus answered : " Seest thou all these great buildings ? There shall not be left a stone upon a stone that shall not be thrown down " (Mark xiii. 2). That was His last farewell to the temple. Having left the doomed city, He passed through the valley of Josaphat, and ascended Mount Olivet. When He reached the top of the mountain, He sat down with His Apostles. Jerusalem was in full view before Him, with its ramparts towering over the deep ravines. He could easily distinguish the palace of the High-Priest, the residence of King Herod, the pretorium of Pilate, and, afar off, Calvary. The Apostles asked Him when the destruction of the city should take place, and He

mentioned some of the events which would precede and accompany the final catastrophe. False prophets would arise and seduce many ; there would be wars and rumours of wars, plagues, earthquakes, and famines ; terrible persecutions would break out against the Church, and threaten its ruin. Then He continued : " When you shall see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. When you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army, know that the desolation thereof is near at hand : then let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains. Amen, I say to you that this generation shall not pass until all these things shall be done " (Matthew, Mark, Luke).

It is a historical fact that these prophecies were fulfilled to the letter thirty-five years after their prediction (Josephus, " Ant.," xx. 5, 1. ; " De Bello Judaico," ii. 13, 5).

Never before had the spirit of lying been so rampant, never before had there been so many deceivers and false prophets, as during the last years of the unfortunate Jerusalem. The people followed these blind and deceitful leaders, and surrendered themselves unreservedly to their fatal guidance. At one time the populace, carrying all their belongings, followed a maniac to the Jordan, with the conviction that the waters would stand apart at the command of the " prophet." At another, thirty thousand people remained several days on Mount Olivet, waiting for the walls of Jerusalem to fall before them. Others took up arms at the voice of fanatical madmen, and rushed to certain death. An incomprehensible giddiness took possession of the masses. The spirit

of evil moved over the whole land, carrying everywhere fanaticism and ruin.

Meanwhile there were wars and rumours of wars on the face of the globe, from the Euphrates and the Caspian Sea even to the remote shores of Brittany in Gaul. Entire cities were destroyed by earthquakes, and the earth quivered and tottered everywhere. Seneca writes concerning these dreadful commotions: "How many towns in Asia and Achaia have already fallen! How many cities in Syria and Macedonia have been swallowed up! And in the island of Cyprus, what ravages are to be seen! How many times has Paphos been shaken to its depths! How often we are told of entire cities having disappeared!" ("Epist.," xci. 9). At the same time famine and plague were prevalent throughout the Roman empire, and during the reign of Claudius thirty thousand Romans died of pestilence in the course of three months.

The persecution against the Christians was fierce and terrible, especially under the reign of Nero, which witnessed the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul. The followers of Christ were subjected to the most excruciating tortures, some being crucified, others devoured by wild beasts, others saturated with pitch, and burnt in the streets like living torches.

As regards Jerusalem, Josephus relates that the city, having been invested by Cestius, the zealots occupied the temple and changed it into a barrack, where they committed all sorts of crimes and abominations, filling the courts with the corpses of those whom they had massacred, and sacrilegiously

mimicking the sacred rites. Thus was the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. Josephus declares that the horrors committed were such that if Jerusalem had not been destroyed by the Romans, it would have been swept away by a deluge, or consumed by fire from Heaven.

Remembering the prophecy of Jesus, the Christians who were in the city retired beyond the Jordan, and from their retreat witnessed the desolation and ruin of their unfortunate country. Titus came to finish the work of destruction. He encompassed Jerusalem with a wall that made it a charnel-pit for eleven hundred thousand Jews. The temple itself was destroyed. A soldier having thrown into it a flaming brand, the fire spread at once with terrific fierceness, and soon consumed the whole edifice.

A few years later the Jews attempted to recover their independence under Hadrian, but six hundred thousand of them were slain, and the rest were scattered and carried away captive among the nations. As regards this dispersion of the Jews, and their wanderings upon the face of the earth, it is well to remember the prophecy of Our Lord : " They shall be led away captives into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, till the times of the nations be fulfilled " (Luke xxi. 24). This scattering of a whole people amongst all the nations of the earth has a very remarkable aspect which is without parallel in the history of the world. When a people is transplanted to a new soil it is soon absorbed by the pre-existing race, and loses its national character. Witness the Moors in

Spain, the Franks in Gaul, the Saxons and Normans in Britain. But the Jews are an exception to this law. During nineteen hundred years they have wandered and lived among the nations, and they have never been absorbed by them. Despite their misfortunes, they have preserved their national character and retained the marks of their individuality. "God, by saving them from absorption," says Bossuet, "holds us in expectation of what He will still do for the remnant of this unhappy people, formerly so favoured" ("Discours sur l'Histoire universelle," part ii., chap. xx.).

The prophecies concerning the ruin of Jerusalem and those concerning the end of the world are so alike that the Evangelists hardly distinguish them. We can say, therefore, that the desolation and destruction of Jerusalem is like a miniature, a tableau, of the desolation and destruction of the world at the end of time. All nature shall be plunged into a state of chaos. There shall be revolutions in the air, in the sea, on the earth, and in the sky. In the air, thunders and disturbances which will create inexpressible dismay. In the sea, storms and commotions such as have never been witnessed before. There shall be a great "distress of nations by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waters." On the earth, pestilences, famines, and earthquakes; whole cities destroyed and levelled to the ground; innumerable multitudes of human beings dying away like flies after the summer's day. In the sky, "there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars. The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall

refuse its light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven." St. John, in his Apocalypse, adds that the sun shall be black as sackcloth, and the moon red as blood. Men themselves will still add to the confusion of nature: "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." Who can express the horror of those last wars of the nations of the earth? Millions of men marching against other millions, and the cannon roaring from one hemisphere to the other, and spreading everywhere death, devastation, and ruin!

But these calamities and disturbances are nothing compared with the persecutions that will afflict the Church. Antichrist, the man of sin and perdition, will appear "in all power and signs and lying wonders." Endowed with the power of the Devil, he will, like Simon the Magician, imitate the miracles of Christ and deceive many. But his morals and doctrine will betray him. St. John calls him the beast, and describes him as the most impious, the most cruel, and the most dissolute of men. He will kindle a persecution so fierce and terrible as to eclipse all the horrors witnessed before. "For there shall be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be, and unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved."

Then the end will come, and the Son of Man will appear in the sky, brighter than the sun, surrounded with great power and majesty, supreme Judge of the living and the dead.

CHAPTER V

THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF JESUS

I.—WHAT THE GOSPEL SAYS.

IT is in the Gospel that we must find Jesus and study Him. The ideal which is thus revealed to us is so sublime, so far removed from all human conceptions, that unbelievers and infidels are at a loss to account for it. In their bewilderment they have recourse to the most senseless theories. Yet we must render them this justice, that they never dare to attack His character. Despite their wanderings and vagaries, they acknowledge that He is the purest type of human integrity. "There are no philosophers of antiquity but have been reproached with some vices; the very patriarchs had their foibles. Christ alone is without blemish. He is the most brilliant copy of that supreme Beauty which is seated upon the throne of Heaven. Pure and sanctified as the tabernacle of the Lord, breathing nought but the love of God and man, infinitely superior by the elevation of His soul to the vain glory of the world, He pursued, amid sufferings of every kind, the great business of our salvation, constraining men by the transcendency of His virtues to embrace His doctrines and to imitate a

life which they were compelled to admire. His character was amiable, open, and tender, and His charity unbounded. The Evangelist gives us a complete and admirable description of it in these few words: 'He went about doing good.' His resignation to the will of God is conspicuous every moment of His life. He loved, and felt the sentiment of friendship. The man whom He raised from the tomb, Lazarus, was His friend. It was for the noblest sentiment of life that He performed the greatest of His miracles. In Him the lovers of country may find a model. 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem!' He exclaimed, at the thought of the judgments which threatened the guilty city, 'how often would I have gathered together thy children, even as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not!' Casting His sorrowful eyes from the top of a hill over this city doomed for her crimes to a signal destruction, He was unable to restrain His tears" (Chateaubriand, "*Génies du Christianisme*"). The whole life of Jesus was marked by mercy and compassion for suffering humanity. From the moment of the Incarnation till the hour of His death all His thoughts, words, and deeds, were directed towards the alleviation of the miseries of fallen man. He suffered with the sufferers, and dried up fountains of tears. His loving heart overflowed with compassion and mercy for repentant sinners. He gently encouraged them to return to Him, portraying Himself under the touching and beautiful figure of the Good Shepherd, and describing God no more in the light of an angry Judge, but as a good Father anxiously awaiting the

return of the prodigal son. There was something so fascinating, so supremely attractive, in His Divine person, that crowds of people, drawn by an irresistible spell, forgetting the very necessities of life, followed Him into desert places, where He had to perform miracles to feed them. The fishermen of Galilee who became His disciples heard Him say to them, "Follow Me," and forsaking everything that was dear to them, regardless of difficulties and persecutions, they clung to Him through good report and bad report, sharing His hardships and trials. The mild and gentle glance of His eye, that touching image of the beauty of His soul; the majesty of His countenance; the august expression of His face—all in Him was beaming with tenderness and mercy. During His passion He simply looked at the unfortunate Peter who had just denied Him, and Peter, going out, wept bitterly. What an extreme reserve in the exercise of His tremendous power of performing miracles! With one word of His sacred lips He might have annihilated His enemies and made the earth swallow them, just as of old the sea swallowed up Pharaoh's chariots and his army, and "they sunk as lead in the mighty waters." But He would not say that word. When the sons of Zebedee asked Him to command fire to come down from Heaven and consume the Samaritans who had refused to receive Him, He rebuked them, saying: "You know not of what spirit you are." And so, with all His omnipotence, He remains defenceless in the presence of those Scribes and Pharisees who insult and defy Him, so sure are they that He will not do them any harm.

“ Everywhere and in everything, what goodness, what justice, what wisdom, what moderation, what penetration, what charming perfection, what sweet majesty, what fulness of grace and truth ! How He shines, how He stands out, and rises Divinely in view from the midst of that stupid people, of those hypocritical Doctors, those insidious Scribes, those proud Pharisees, those disciples too often intolerant and unpolished ! How He confounds all errors by His light ! How He foils all artifices by His wisdom ! How he crushes all vices by His holiness ! How He gives confidence and hope to all weaknesses by His meekness ! How He wears out all furies by His patience ! How He relieves all sufferings by His goodness ! Truly He is the God-Saviour, the good God ” (Nicolas, “ Études Philosophiques,” tome iv., chap. ii.). Consider some of the burning words and utterances which issued from His Divine heart—what an intensity of love ! “ I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how I am straitened until it be performed.” “ Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” What a magnitude of love ! “ Come to Me all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. If any man thirst let him come to Me.” If any man thirst after happiness, after consolation, after peace, after repentance, let him come to Me. What a magnet of love ! “ Suffer little children to come to Me, and forbid them not. Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart.” Before His coming nothing was heard through the broad, wicked world but the cries of despair of innumerable multitudes enslaved,

crushed, and sacrificed without mercy. And one day He uttered these words: "Blessed are they that mourn; blessed are they that suffer." And these words have produced a revolution in the world; they have changed the face of society, and have created innumerable heroes, martyrs, and virgins.

II.—JESUS HAS NO RIVAL.

The moral beauty of Jesus' character is unique; it transcends all perfection and all comparison. The different temperaments which distinguish our race are scattered over the whole of the human family in such a way that you will never find two men with exactly the same moral features, the same dispositions, the same aptitudes, the same inclinations. In like manner the perfections and virtues which adorn human nature assume an almost indefinite variety of shades and forms. We all have our own favourite virtues and we practise them in our own way, because they are mixed up with our needs, our habits, our surroundings, our temptations, our troubles. Now take all that is best and fairest in these scattered rays of human rectitude, and make up an ideal that will contain all the excellence which your imagination can invent and your intelligence can conceive, and I will say that your ideal is profound darkness compared with the immense splendour of Jesus' perfections. Pass in review the greatest of men, in every condition of life; think of the greatest sages and philosophers, the greatest heroes, the greatest legislators; mention Demosthenes, Plato, Socrates, Cæsar, Charlemagne,

Thomas Aquinas, Bossuet, Napoleon, and hundreds of others who are so far above the ordinary level of our humanity; how small they appear when contrasted with Jesus! In His presence they all vanish away, like shadows before the brightness of the sun. You cannot compare Him to any great man; He transcends all comparisons, and for that reason He provokes no jealousy, because everyone knows that He can never be equalled. There is a certain resemblance between a hero and another hero, a Saint and another Saint, a sage and another sage, but there is no possible resemblance between Jesus and the purest flowers of the race. He has, and can have, no rival. He is an exception to the general law. He forms an order apart. The difference between Him and the greatest of men is not a difference of degree, but of kind, and as a philosopher rightly says: "If the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God." Reflect but a moment on what was considered, in His time, the highest standard of human perfection, then try and compare it with Him. What a contrast! His character is not only different from the Jewish type, it is opposed to it. What resemblance is there between His virtue and the pedantry of the Scribes and Pharisees, of the Rabbis and expounders of the law? Turn now to the Saints of the Old Testament, the holy personages to whom the palm of virtue is awarded—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Samuel, Moses, David, and so many others—and tell me if they are in any way like unto our great Ideal? Hence the emptiness and manifest absurdity of the

modern theory which assumes that the Apostles invented the character of their Master. We repeat it : Jesus is not a Jewish type ; He is a new creation, a revelation altogether Divine. How could the fishermen of Galilee, who were naturally ignorant, conceive this great vision and give it shape and form ? How could they find this ideal so different from whatever they had seen or known before, so contrary to the dreams of perfection exhibited to them by custom, patriotism, or religion ? If they had invented their hero, then surely they would have made him to the image and likeness of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were the Saints of those times ; or they would have painted him in the light of the glorious Messiah expected by the Jews—that is, as a mighty King and a great conqueror, who would restore the kingdom to Israel. Then again, if the Hero of the Gospel is a fiction, how is it that the four Evangelists represent Him in exactly the same light and with the same features ? The Gospels were written at different times, by different men, who were separated from one another, and could not possibly consult among themselves, and yet the same Gospels are like four beautiful statues cast in the same mould. Evidently they are a faithful copy of the same living reality, otherwise we are in the presence of a wonder bordering on the impossible, and absolutely inexplicable. Willing or unwilling, the infidel must face this difficulty.

There is another observation which has often struck me. In other men holiness is almost always inseparable from tears of repentance, good resolutions, the desire to amend. It is not so in Jesus.

There is no regret in Him, no remorse, no fear. His conscience is virginal, His peace undisturbed. He says to His disciples : " When you pray, say : Forgive us our trespasses." But He Himself does not pray in this way. He defies His enemies to find the least fault in Him. " Which of you shall convince Me of sin ?" If any other man, even the greatest of Saints, had uttered those words, at that very moment he would have lost the crown of his virtue. On the lips of Jesus, on the contrary, the same words are so natural that they excite no wonder, and the Pharisees themselves do not take up the challenge. They watch Him incessantly, they endeavour to take Him by surprise, they devise all sorts of means to entrap Him, in order to detect or provoke a sinful act or a guilty word ; but all their attempts end in failure, and what proves the fact is this : that they have recourse to the last expedient of wounded pride—namely, force. " Which of you shall convince Me of sin ?" His Church is founded and built on these words, because if men should succeed in discovering in His virtue any of those flaws which are inseparable from human weakness, then His Church would at once crumble and disappear. All perfections are gathered together in His beautiful soul, and, strange to say, they are there with their contrasts. Who felt as He did the sentiment of His own glory, and yet who was more humble ? Who appeared more austere, and yet who was more compassionate and more tender ? Who knew better our profound misery and abjection, and yet who loved us with a purer and stronger love ? Who was more spotless and immaculate,

and yet who was more mortified? Who had a greater horror for sin, and yet who treated sinners with more tenderness? Who suffered more bitterly and more unjustly, and yet who was more patient, more gentle, more resigned, or more forgiving?

III.—OTHER ASPECTS OF JESUS' CHARACTER.

Although transcending all human perfection, Jesus is not inaccessible. He may be imitated by all; by the young and the old, the ignorant and the learned, the rich and the poor. There is no sublime extravagance in Him, no impossible extremes; His personality adapts itself to all. The virtues of the Saints have a certain rigidity and stiffness which frighten us when we consider them. We can see that they have to do violence to their nature; in fact, we can detect human weakness in their very virtues. For them perfection consists in strife; it supposes an effort, a struggle, a tension, a violent uplifting of the whole man. They have to restrain themselves, and continually resist that terrible current which threatens to bring them under the law of sin. But it is not so in Jesus; there is no rigid austerity in Him, no violence, no constraint. He always possesses His soul in peace. His faculties are always calm and serene, and in the midst of the most awful trials His tranquillity remains undisturbed. We do not see any intestine war, any disturbance or commotion in His beautiful soul. He is naturally good, righteous, gentle, self-possessed. All His virtues are uppermost, they are at the same level, and they all reach the supreme summit of human perfection. And yet He is a

type for the whole race, and He wishes us to follow Him. "One of the things which charm me most in the character of Jesus," says J. J. Rousseau, "is not only His meekness of disposition and simplicity, but also His easy ways, His grace, and even elegance. He did not shun amusements and entertainments; He went to wedding-feasts; He spoke to women; He played with little children. He shrank not from perfumes, and He ate with moneyed men. His controlling influence was not troublesome. He knew how to be at the same time indulgent and just; how to be meek and gentle to the humble and terrible to the proud. His moral teaching was attractive, winning, and tender. He had a sensitive heart. He was a man of good society. Even if He had not been the wisest of mortals, He would still have been the most amiable of men" ("Lettres de la Montagne," No. 3). But what is most striking, perhaps, in the moral beauty of Jesus is its character of universality. Great men are moulded on their age; they are the living expression of their time, and too often the outcome of circumstances. If you transplant them to another age, they are out of date and out of place. If you analyze their virtue or their excellence, you will see at once that it was prepared and outlined in their predecessors, or in their masters, or at least in the school which reared and sheltered their genius. The case of Jesus is very different. He gives light, but does not receive it. He is a new creation, and has no antecedent, no preparation of any kind. Like a luminous body of inexpressible brilliancy, He appears, all on a sudden, in the darkness of

pagan times, and sheds His overwhelming and everlasting splendour on the whole universe. His light suits alike all times and places, and it can never be extinguished. It is as bright and pure to-day as it was twenty centuries ago. All other men play their part upon the theatre of this world, and disappear, to be forgotten. Some of them may excite wonder and attention for a while, but like those bright and short-lived meteors which, on a dark, gloomy night, enlighten the sky and dazzle for a moment, so do these men create a little excitement, and then they go the way of all flesh, and their memory perishes. Not so with Jesus ; He survives all human events, all changes and revolutions ; He dominates all times. After nineteen hundred years of existence He is still younger than ever. Everyone speaks of Him, everyone admires Him. He is the mainspring of all regenerations, the pivot of all great events. Christianity is His school, and Christianity speaks with innumerable tongues. He is truly the soul and the life of the world, the first principle and the last end of everything great, holy, heroic, sublime. The fate of those who fight against Him is to perish, whilst victory is always and infallibly the reward of those who follow His standard. His name is engraved on the forehead of all generations, and on the face of all the nations of the earth. He alone lives and endures for ever. The infidels themselves bear testimony to this fact. The impious Renan sums up in the following beautiful page the universal influence of Jesus : " Repose in thy glory, O Noble Instructor. Thy work is done, Thy Divinity established. The

edifice erected by Thy efforts is now firm and standing ; fear not to see it crumble into ruin. Henceforth beyond the reach of human frailty, Thou wilt see, from the height of Thy Divine peace, the infinite consequences of Thy actions. At the cost of a few hours of sufferings, which have not even touched Thy great soul, Thou hast purchased immortality. During thousands of years to come the world will rest on Thee, and live by Thee. A thousand times more living, a thousand times more beloved after Thy death than during Thy passage here below, Thou wilt become, to such an extent, the corner-stone of humanity, that to take away Thy name would mean to shake the world in its very foundation. Men will no more distinguish between Thee and God. Fully victor of death, take possession of Thy kingdom, where centuries of adorers will follow Thee by the royal road which Thou didst tread " (*" Vie de Jesus "*). What a contrast between this universal sway and the so-called conquests of the heroes of the earth ! Remember the great names recorded in the book of history—Hannibal, Alexander, Augustus, Cæsar, Napoleon—who thinks of them ? who cares for them ? How different is the destiny of Jesus ! He lives not only in the memory, but in the lives of individuals and nations. Hundreds of millions of human beings are ready, at a moment's notice, to sacrifice their existence for His sake ; hundreds of millions of human beings try to reproduce His life and His virtues ; they invoke Him, they love Him, they adore Him. If all historical records should cease to exist, if all the monuments of the

past should be destroyed and annihilated, if all certainty about the past generations should vanish away, Jesus would still subsist, and His memory remain, because He is mixed up with the life and blood of millions ; the laws, the customs, and institutions of nations and peoples are permeated with His spirit or dominated by His influence. His example is essentially fruitful. It has created the Christian type ; it has promoted innumerable heroisms ; it has exerted an immense influence on the destinies of the world. His actions and words have been treasured up, meditated upon, examined, pondered over by sixty generations of men, and they contain an infinite and inexhaustible source of holiness and virtue. Amongst those who have followed His footsteps, what prodigies of sanctity and perfection ! And what number in their ranks ! Yet what a distance between them and their model ! Too often the disciple eclipses his master, as well in literature, sciences, and art, as in moral perfection, and it not unfrequently happens that when a teacher has a brilliant retinue of disciples, one of them surpasses him in excellence and merit. Jesus, on the contrary, is so far away from the most perfect of His followers that it would almost be blasphemous to establish a comparison between Him and the greatest of His Saints. When we speak of His moral beauty we cannot possibly fall into exaggeration. He exhausts all praise, and whatever is said of Him must finally end in adoration.

IV.—WHAT JESUS SAYS OF HIMSELF.

This extraordinary Being calls Himself the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Light of the world, the eternal Life. In the very face of death, when He knows that the confession of His Divinity will bring upon His head the most terrible of all calamities, He does not hesitate to proclaim His Divine origin. "And the High-Priest said to Him : I adjure thee by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith to him : Thou hast said it " (Matt. xxvi. 63). During almost the whole of His passion, when He was reviled and blasphemed in a thousand ways, He remained silent, like the gentle lamb led to the sacrifice. "And Jesus held His peace" (*id.*). But when His Divinity is put into question, then He deems it a sacred duty to confess it, in the face of His enraged executioners. His declaration is clear, formal, precise. There is no possible equivocation about it. He thinks it not robbery to be equal to God. (Phil. ii. 6). Therefore He is what He says. If He is not, then He deceives us. Now, to say that we are deceived by Him is to utter a senseless absurdity. Jesus a deceiver, an imposter ! The purest flower of our race, the personification of all holiness, the very incarnation of virtue—a deceiver, an imposter ! The Saviour of fallen man, the healer of so many broken hearts, the consoler of the oppressed, the restorer of human integrity—a cheat, a villain ! Great God ! The man who can stand this does not deserve the name of man ; he has lost his reason. Let us weigh well

the gravity of this fact, because it deserves all our attention. If Jesus is not God, then all His life is one inscrutable mystery, a contradiction that cannot be explained, because He always acts and poses as the Son of God ; the history of the world becomes an enigma, since all that is best and holiest and most highly intellectual in our humanity have clung to Him, in life and in death, during nineteen centuries. If He is not God, then virtue and vice are mere names without a meaning ; and God Himself ceases to be God. If an imposter, a fraud can conceive and execute against God and man such a gigantic enterprise ; if he can cheat God and man to this extent ; if he can confiscate to his profit the incommunicable rights of God ; if he can set himself up as the supreme lord of creation, the very judge of the living and the dead ; if he can do this with impunity, without being crushed by the vengeance of the Almighty, then I say there is no God ! Infidels have no escape ; they must face this terrible dilemma—either Jesus is God, or He is the most wicked of men. They may, and they do, proclaim that He is a great benefactor, a genius that has never been equalled. They may, and they do, admire His work, and wonder at the influence which He has exerted on the destinies of the world ; how He has swept and driven away from the face of the earth the abominations of pagan times ; how He has closed the arenas which had witnessed the extinction of so many noble lives ; how He has abolished slavery ; how He has purified the human heart and impressed upon the race the sentiment of its true greatness ; how He has created charity,

chastity, and humility—these three sisters of genius. They may, and they do, acknowledge and proclaim all this, but yet in the end they must face the awful truth—either Jesus is God, or He is a most wicked blasphemer. Jesus a blasphemer! Ah! Do you believe in virtue and honour? Count all the sacrifices and heroisms of which the belief in the Divinity of Jesus has been the inspirer, the principle and the end. Look at these millions of martyrs who have laid down their lives for the cause of Christ—will you say that they are only sublime fools? Consider the great ideals to which men have arisen, the noble virtues that have been practised by sixty generations of pure and spotless souls, and tell me if human reason does not shrink from the thought that all these sacrifices and heroisms, all these celestial virtues, have originated from, and are grounded upon, imposture and folly?

Napoleon, in his retreat of St. Helena, with all the experience of his life, with all his knowledge of men, himself the greatest genius of his age, away from the turmoil of the passions and the noise of the world, confessed the Divinity of Jesus Christ. He said to General Bertrand, the companion of his exile: “I have had good experience of men, and I assure you that Jesus is more than a man. . . . We admire the conquests of Alexander! Well, here is a conqueror who confiscates for his own profit, who incorporates to himself, not a nation, but the whole human race. What a miracle! . . . Christ claims the love of men, a thing which it is so difficult to obtain; He claims what a sage vainly demands from a few friends, a father from his children, a brother from his brother—the heart. That is what

He claims for Himself. He exacts it absolutely—and forthwith He succeeds. I believe in His Divinity. Alexander, Cæsar, Hannibal, Louis XIV., with all their genius, have failed. They conquered the world, and did not succeed in making a friend. . . . Christ speaks, and henceforth all generations are bound to Him by ties far closer than those of blood, by a union more intimate, more sacred, more powerful than any other union. He lights up the flame of a love which consumes selfishness and overrules all other affections. At this miracle of His will, how can we fail to recognize the Word-Creator of the universe? This is what I, Napoleon, admire most, and I have often thought of it. In my own opinion, this fact proves absolutely the Divinity of Christ. I have stirred up and electrified multitudes who died for me. But my presence was necessary, the fascination of my looks, the tone of my voice, a word from me. I know I possess the secret of that magic power which carries away the mind, but I could not communicate it to anyone. None of my generals ever received it from me. I have no longer the secret of immortalizing my name or my love in the hearts of men. Now that I am in St. Helena, now that I am nailed to this rock, who battles for me, who conquers empires for me? Where are my courtiers? Does anyone think of me? Who cares now for Napoleon in Europe? Who has remained faithful to me? Where are my friends? Oh! what an abyss between my wretched misery and the eternal reign of Christ, loved, preached, adored, living in the whole universe!" ("Mémoires du Général Bertrand").

CHAPTER VI

THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD

I.—ONE PERSON IN TWO NATURES.

“ THIS is the true faith, to believe and confess that Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man. He is God, begotten before all ages from the substance of His Father, and man, born in time from the substance of His Mother. Perfect God and perfect man : composed of a rational soul and of human flesh. Equal to His Father by His Divinity, inferior to Him by His humanity. Although at the same time God and man, there are not in Him two, but only one Christ. One, not by the conversion of His Divinity into flesh, but by the assumption of His humanity unto God. One absolutely, not by any confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For as the rational soul and the body are but one man, so God and man are but one Christ.” These words of the Athanasian Creed are the pure expression of Apostolic teaching concerning the great mystery of the Incarnation. Christ, that wonderful Being, is God and man, yet one and the same person. Thus are dispelled all the fallacies with which heresy and unbelief have tried to obscure the unassailable and unchangeable teaching of the

Church. The Cerinthians taught that Jesus was a mere man on whom the Holy Ghost descended, in the form of a dove, when He was baptized in the Jordan, but the same Holy Spirit left Him at the time of His passion. The Arians, those radicals of infidelity, were still more formal in denying absolutely the Divinity of Jesus Christ. The Docetæ asserted that the body of the Saviour was a mere shadow or phantom, without any reality. But all the errors concerning the Incarnation may be summed up in the heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches. The former taught that there were two persons in Jesus, as well as two natures, and that these two persons, although closely associated and united, still remained independent of each other. The latter, on the contrary, pretended that the two natures were combined and mixed up in such a way as to form one and the same nature—that is, a kind of monstrous mixture of Divinity and humanity. The truth is that the two natures in Christ remain integral and perfect, under the rule and control of the selfsame Divine Person. There is no combination, no mixture, no confusion, no absorption; they stand side by side, but are governed and directed by the same personality. Hence Our Lord has two wills—as well as two minds or intellects: the Divine will—uncreated, immutable, omnipotent, dominating and governing all forces; the human will—created and requiring the help and assistance of grace; the Divine intelligence—infinite, illimitable, grasping, in the most exhaustive manner, all that is knowable; the human intellect—bright and powerful indeed, yet finite, limited, unable to com-

prehend all possibilities. But if there are two different sorts of faculties and actions in Christ, there is but one agent. The two natures so distinct, so divergent, so adverse, so heterogeneous, are under the direction and guidance of the same Person. The personality is neither part nor portion of the nature ; it simply terminates it. In the Trinity there is but one nature, and yet there are three distinct Persons. In Our Blessed Lord, on the contrary, there are two natures, and yet only one Person. To be a man, then, does not necessarily mean to be a human person. Christ is a man like ourselves, but He is not a human person. The person is the arbiter, the controller of the actions of a nature, the proximate principle from which all the operations of that nature derive their dignity, their excellence, their merit. Jesus could say in all truth : " I am uncreated, eternal, infinite, impassible, the author of life ; and I am a creature, I was born in time, I am limited, passible, and mortal." Hence St. Peter says to the Jews : " The author of life you killed " (Acts iii. 15). All the actions of the sacred humanity of Our Lord, although finite and restricted by nature, were still infinite and unbounded in worth and acceptableness, because they proceeded from the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. If there had been two persons in Jesus, our redemption would have been impossible ; because sin, being an offence of infinite malice, requires an infinite expiation. Now God, on the one hand, is evidently incapable of expiation—that is, of humiliation and suffering ; on the other, the satisfaction of a purely human person could

never be infinite in excellence and merit. Hence if God wishes sin to be fully atoned for, He must assume human nature, and, through His Divine Personality, communicate to it a virtue sufficient to pay the infinite debt.

II.—JESUS CONSIDERED AS GOD.

Considered as God, Jesus is the mighty Being Who created the world. His name is Jehovah, the Powerful, the Terrible, the God of armies. He gave to the earth and the sea all their treasures, and He scattered the stars in the firmament. In His sight all the realms of the world are as if they were not. He says to the sea : “ Hitherto shalt thou come, and shalt go no farther.” He looks upon the earth and makes it tremble. He governs and supports all things by His Providence, follows the celestial bodies in their revolutions, and watches the atom floating in the boundless regions of space. Look at the beautiful stars, when they are sparkling in the blue firmament. Millions of them are millions of times larger than the earth, and they are millions of millions of miles apart. The nearest fixed star, our next-door neighbour, is twenty-five trillion two hundred and fourteen billion four hundred million miles distant from us. If you attempt to triangulate it, taking for your base the diameter of the earth’s orbit, which is one hundred and ninety million miles in length, the sides of your triangle will be practically parallel. Beyond these immense distances, multiplied millions of times, there still are millions of other stars which the most powerful instruments can hardly distinguish. And

beyond these again a new immensity begins, peopled with countless multitudes of gigantic worlds, which appear on the lens of the telescope like diminutive parasites on the hair of a giant. The vault of Heaven and the whole of the visible sky are, in all truth, an insignificant bubble on the ocean of God's immensity. How great, then, how powerful is our Christ, since He is the Creator of all these ! " All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made " (John i. 3). " Heaven is His throne, and the earth His footstool " (Isa. lxii. 1). " And of His greatness there is no end " (Ps. clxiv. 3). After this, can there be anything more ridiculous than to see human beings, those microbes of creation, posing before God, discussing His rights, and patronizing Him ? The great Newton was seen to incline his head every time that he pronounced the Name of God. How different from the pigmies of the present time, who make such a show and display of their knowledge, and are ignorant of their Maker ! Not long ago a priest was summoned to the death-bed of a celebrated astronomer. He suggested to the dying man some thoughts on the goodness of God and the hope of eternity. " God, eternity," replied the latter—" beautiful problems ! But life is so short ; I had no time to solve them." He had no time to solve them ! He had time to study the motions of the stars and measure their orbits, he had time to admire the ineffable harmony and grandeur of the universe ; but he had no time to think of the Author of all these wonders !

The Divine life of Christ is measured by eternity

Word or Thought of His Father, He can exclaim in all truth : “ I was set up from eternity and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived. . . . The mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established : before the hills I was brought forth ” (Prov. viii. 23). There are only two words that can give us a faint idea of eternity—namely, always and never. It is an existence that always was and always will be, and therefore that will never cease to be. Eternity is the full possession of a life that has neither beginning nor end, neither past nor future ; it is an immutable and eternal present, which cannot be affected by the changes and variations of time : “ I am the Lord, and I change not ” (Mal. iii. 6). What a contrast with our existence here below ! We pass away so rapidly ! “ All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered and the flower is fallen ” (Isa. xl. 6.) Everything around us is so changeable and short-lived that the mere thought of eternity fills us with awe and confusion. Christ is eternal because He is God. “ Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever ” (Heb. xiii. 8). During our short stay on earth this great and almighty Being holds us suspended by a thread over the abyss of nothingness. In His presence we are powerless, impotent, destitute. He surrounds us by His immensity, and He is more present to us than we are to ourselves. In Him we move, we live, and we are. His piercing eye pervades the very substance of our soul, and we cannot hide from Him the most foolish fancy. “ O

Lord, if I ascend into Heaven, Thou art there ; if I descend into Hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me " (Ps. cxxxviii.).

III.—JESUS CONSIDERED AS MAN.

If Jesus is God He is also man, like every other child of humanity, and He loves to call Himself the Son of Man, because it is His title of combat. Speaking of the events which will precede the last judgment, and describing Himself as the supreme Judge of the living and the dead, He says : " Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven : and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn : and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with much power and majesty " (Matt. xxiv. 30). He is indeed the Son of Man. His immaculate Mother, the pure and spotless Mary, the type of womanhood, the ideal of human perfection, conceived Him by the almighty power of the Holy Ghost. She was adorned with the most lovely virtues, and purer far than the brightest Angels. Our Lord derived all His humanity from her, since He had no father in this world. Hence there was between them a great moral and physical resemblance. They had the same features, the same temperament, the same inclination for all that is grand, noble, and pure. Jesus assumed human nature in all its integrity : He assumed a body endowed with senses and a soul endowed with faculties. In this respect there was no difference between Him and the other children of men. But

the perfections of that nature were so great, so transcendant, as to baffle description. They cannot be properly estimated by human or Angelic intelligence. Our Lord was in every sense the accomplished ideal and type of all created excellence. Reason tells us that the properties and qualities of a being must be in keeping with the condition or office of that being ; and if God, in His wisdom, chooses to raise a nature to a high dignity, He is bound to bestow on that nature all the perfections and requirements necessary for such a dignity. This principle is evidently incontrovertible. But who will ever be able to understand the dignity of the sacred humanity of the Son of God ? Is He not the beginning and the end of all things ? Is He not the King of kings and the Lord of lords ? St. Paul says that God has appointed Him heir of all things (Heb. i. 2), " setting Him on His right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality, and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And he has subjected all things under his feet " (Eph. i. 20-22). Being the end of all things and the central point round which everything revolves, it is not surprising that " in Him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell " (Col. i. 19). His body was the masterpiece of the whole visible creation ; its organic structure, its constitution, its delicacy and sensitiveness were absolutely perfect. It might, and it did, experience hunger and thirst, cold and heat, suffering and pain ; but it was never affected by sickness or infirmity. The ailments and

physical disorders which weaken our frame proceed either from the weakness of our constitution or from the excesses of immoderate conduct. The body of Christ was the work of the Holy Ghost ; it was a miraculous body, and therefore its excellence was supreme, its perfection absolute. On the other hand, Our Lord never acted immoderately, but all His actions were well regulated, and always performed with order, gentleness, and reserve. His soul was the faithful ally of His body. Both body and soul were so closely united as to form but one and the same substance, under the control and guidance of the Divine Personality. In that soul there was no inclination to evil, none of those impediments to virtue which beset our way. Not only did He not commit sin, but He could not possibly do so, because the sinful act is imputed to the person, and He was a Divine Person. Besides, the delightful vision of God which He enjoyed from the first moment of His existence drew His whole being away from all earthly alloy. His holiness reached the supreme summit of human perfection. All virtues attained in Him their highest and brightest expression ; they were all summed up and blended together in His beautiful soul. He was the picture of meekness and gentleness, of purity and innocence. Think of His humility, think of that God leaving the splendour of His eternity, and traversing the infinite, in order to become man, and to die a death of shame ! Think of His obedience. The supreme Being, Whose independence is His highest attribute, was subject to His own creatures and became obedient unto

death, even the death of the cross ! Think of His love of God and of men : “ Greater love than this no man hath that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Think of His patience, His resignation, His greatness of soul, His fortitude, His goodness, and mercy. With the plenitude of all virtues He possessed the plenitude of all graces. His dowry of grace immensely surpassed all the accumulations of graces, all the oceans and abysses of supernatural gifts ever bestowed, or ever to be bestowed, on all the creatures of God, in time and eternity. In other men grace is susceptible of an indefinite increase, and is received in the soul by successive instalments. In Christ it was not so. His soul was filled to overflowing at the first moment of its creation. The first instalment was also the last. There was no room for more. He was “ full of grace and truth : and of His fulness we have all received ” (John i. 15, 16). The soul of an infant that has been regenerated by baptism is so dazzling, so exceedingly beautiful, as to throw the Angels of God into amazement. The soul of a Saint is millions of times more bright and beautiful. But who will give us even a faint idea of the brightness of Jesus’ soul, since its splendour surpasses, billions of times, the accumulated brilliancy of all Saints and Angels ?

IV.—THE INTELLIGENCE, THE WILL, AND THE HEART OF JESUS.

I. *His Intelligence.*

A heretic of the fourth century, called Apollinaris, taught that Christ had no human intelligence, as it

would have served no purpose. He says that the Divine mind, like an immense ocean of light, flooded the sacred humanity, and supplied the human intellect, just as when the sun sheds its brightness over fields and mountains every other light disappears and becomes useless. The Church has condemned this error. If the soul of Christ was deprived of human intelligence, then He assumed only a mutilated nature, and He was not a man as we are. The intelligence belongs to the integrity of man ; hence to deprive Jesus of it is to destroy all real belief in the Incarnation. Let us say, then, that Our Lord had the profoundest, the quickest, and deepest intellect that can be conceived. Nothing in this world can compare with the sublimity, the universality, the brightness, the power of that mighty intelligence, or the variety and extent of its knowledge. Jesus was indeed " the light and the truth," and in Him were hidden all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom. From the first moment of His human existence He enjoyed, without interruption, the immediate vision of God. He saw the Divine essence, the fountain-head of all that is knowable and beautiful, and He had continually the feeling, the sentiment, grand, immense, overpowering, of the attributes of God, His infinity, His immensity, His eternity, His immutability, His omnipotence, His goodness, and His justice.

Besides this beatific vision, He had an infused and clear knowledge of all things and events, past, present, and future. He knew the hierarchies and orders, the perfection and glory of the celestial

spirits, all the thoughts and volitions of all Angels and men. He knew the whole and the details of the created universe, the number of the stars, their distances and dimensions, their motions and revolutions through the infinite regions of space. He counted all the atoms and molecules of matter, and the innumerable multitude of those infinitesimal beings which the most powerful instruments can hardly reveal, and which are sporting and swarming by millions in a drop of water. Centre of all historical events, He had a perfect knowledge of history, from the creation of man down to the consummation of the world. The generations of the past and the unborn generations of the future were all marshalled before Him.

Yet we must say that this mighty intelligence, even raised and magnified by the light of glory, did not, and could not, know all possibilities. Limited and finite, it could not fully grasp the infinite, nor comprehend God completely.

2. The Will of Christ.

The human will of Christ was in keeping with His intelligence. In other men the will is fickle and capricious, because it is attracted by a thousand allurements and passions. It was not so in Him. His soul was peaceful and His will was strong. There was no concupiscence to distract or estrange Him from uprightness and virtue. He was superior to all storms and commotions. During the whole of His passion the tempest which was raging in the inferior part of His soul did not affect nor trouble the perfect equanimity and sublime peacefulness of

His will. Again, there was no hesitation, no doubt, no tardiness, in His resolves. The light which illumined the mind was so vivid, so powerful, that the will took its decision without effort, and remained irrevocably fixed in it. Why are we so often uncertain of our way, and tossed about by hesitation and doubt? How is it that we break our resolutions and allow ourselves to be dragged along by our caprices? It is principally because the light of our minds is weak and variable. To-day we are influenced by reasons which were unknown to us yesterday, and to-morrow, perhaps, a new light will break in upon us, and so modify or change our resolves. In the will of Christ there was no hesitation, no perplexity, no relaxation, none of those ups and downs which are inseparable from human weakness. It always acted with its full measure of force and energy, and for the greatest glory of God. All the faculties of that great soul—the mind, the memory, the imagination, the concupiscible and irascible powers, the interior and exterior senses—formed, under the guidance of the will, a perfect whole; they had no inclination except for good, no attraction except for virtue.

3. *The Sacred Heart of Jesus.*

The riches of that heart, its power and energy of love, the sublimity of its aspirations, cannot be expressed in human language. Everything is extraordinary in this wonderful Being, but more so perhaps the treasures of His heart. The flames that issued forth from this burning furnace exceeded, millions of times, the accumulated ardours

of all the martyrs, the virgins, the confessors, the Saints, and all the hierarchies and choirs of Angels. The heart of Jesus was the heart of a God, and its love was a Divine love. The heart of Jesus was the source and fountain of the blood of redemption, that precious blood, one drop of which was more than sufficient to redeem millions of worlds. The heart of Jesus was the faithful ally and companion of the most beautiful soul ever created by God's omnipotence. The heart of Jesus was overpowered, sanctified, consecrated by its union with the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, a union which raised it above everything created, and communicated to all its aspirations and feelings a virtue that was infinite.

The love of the Sacred Heart for God and for men cannot be properly estimated, far less can it be described ; it was all but infinite. On the other hand, its sufferings and sorrows were so great, so prodigious, that the mere thought of them overwhelms our reason and fills our hearts with terror. To compare them to the immense and boundless sea is but to give a faint idea of their galling bitterness and their inexpressible greatness.

CHAPTER VII

THE HIGH-PRIEST

I.—ORIGIN, ANTIQUITY, AND UNIVERSALITY OF SACRIFICES.

THE Priesthood of Jesus Christ is the central point round which everything revolves. It is the sun which enlightens the history of the world from the creation of man, and will continue to enlighten it till the final consummation at the end of time. The most ancient traditions, the theogonies of nations, the religious rites and ceremonies of the most civilized peoples, as well as of the most barbarous tribes, the Mosaic practices, the sacrifices of the Jews—all foreshadowed and announced the eternal priesthood of Christ. This is indeed a grand and sublime thought, “Grandis sermo” (Heb. v. 11), as St. Paul says, deserving our deepest attention.

The craze of evolution pervades almost every modern theory, not only in natural sciences, but also in religious history. Modernists state that Fetishism was the first religion of humanity. The race, in its infancy, worshipped rough and shapeless idols supposed to be possessed of a mysterious and supernatural virtue. Then came the worship of heroes or illustrious personages reputed for their

valour, intrepidity, or genius. On leaving this world, they were transferred to the celestial abode of peace, where they became gods or semigods, and their deified souls, called shades or manes, received the adoration of the race. After this came the more refined worship of the Jews, the worship of a spiritual God, called Jehovah, the Almighty, the Terrible, the God of armies. This worship evolved in its turn into the Trinity of the Christians and the Incarnation of the Eternal Word. But this new religion of a Triune God will not remain stationary ; it will develop into immanence, or worship of our own humanity. God is but the sum total of all human energies, and each individual soul is a spark, a ray, of the Deity.

According to the same Modernists, the evolution of sacrifices followed the fortunes of religion. At the very beginning men thought that the best way to appease and subdue the unknown forces of Nature was to offer them presents in the form of libations and food. Then came the shedding of blood, and a whole round of elaborate offerings, which culminated in the holocaust. The victim offered in holocaust was subjected to a slow fire, and vanished into a vaporous, elastic fluid, which was inhaled with delight by the deity as a draught of most sweet odour. Under the impulse given to religion by Christianity, these rude sacrifices disappeared, to be replaced by the sacrifice of the cross, and its mystical representation, the sacrifice of the Mass.

These theories, shaped and fashioned by successive artists, are nothing but the product of sick

minds and heated imaginations. The doctrine of evolution, as applied to religion and sacrifice, is not merely untenable; it is absurd. The book of Genesis is the only authentic record we possess concerning our origin and the origin of religion, and this book clearly shows that man, at his appearance in the world, worshipped one only God, Creator of Heaven and earth. Hence Fetishism, Anthropomorphism, or any other form of Polytheism, are posterior to Monotheism. As for sacrifices, they did not, at the beginning, take the form of a repast, nor were they offered to the unknown agencies of Nature. They were offered to the true God. The victims were immolated and sometimes consumed in order to testify that God is the Lord of life and death, and that His dominion over us has neither restriction nor bounds. The feeding of fetishes and shades with viands, liquids, and vapours came afterwards.

It is not certain that the primitive institution of sacrifices was formally revealed by God. The Angelic Doctor teaches that men were prompted by a kind of Divine instinct (*instinctu Divino*) to worship in that way, and that God approved and accepted their sacrifices (Sum., I, 2, 9, 103, a 1). Later on, when Jehovah entered into a real covenant with His chosen people, Moses received from Him special lights and revelations concerning the sacrifices of the Old Law. The Mosaic ceremonial is evidently of Divine institution, and yet it cannot be said to be altogether new. It has very striking affinities with the ceremonials of Chaldæa and Egypt, and it may be well surmised that Moses, in

the name and with the sanction of Jehovah, borrowed from his ancestral traditions and from Egyptian usages some of the practices contained in the Old Testament.

From all this it is manifest that the idea of sacrifice is as old as the human race. Sacrifice has, at all times and in all places, been considered as the greatest and the highest act of worship, the most authentic, the most unquestionable and unquestioned form of adoration, the supreme manifestation of religion. "The sacrifice," says William Robertson Smith, "is the central feature in every worship" ("Encyclopædia Britannica"—Sacrifice). Our sacred books mention the sacrifices of the children of Adam, and those of the ancient patriarchs. All the blessings of Jehovah upon Israel were bound up with sacrifices, and the covenant of God with His people was cemented in the blood of victims. The Book of Leviticus describes at full length the different sorts of sacrifices and the rites which accompanied them. There were sacrifices for the priests and sacrifices for the people; sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving, sacrifices of atonement and penance.

The Greeks, whose colonies were scattered all over the known world, have left us endless descriptions of the sacrifices and religious offerings of almost all nations and peoples. Homer, Herodotus, Pausanias, Dioscorus, represent to us the whole world clustered round the altars and victims. They mention the various forms of sacrifices, from the offering at the family hearth to the national sacrifice, offered in the temple, with great solemnity. In

Rome and the Roman colonies sacrifice was associated with almost every circumstance of the public and private life of the individual man. In Gaul, Britain, and Spain, the Druids, crowned with the sacred mistletoe, offered sacrifice on tables of stone in the midst of impenetrable forests.

II.—THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SACRIFICE.

We find in every sacrifice certain marks and characters that are common, general, and universal.

1. It is a curious fact that the shedding of blood has always been considered as a means of expiation. “*Sine sanguinis effusione non fit remissio*” (Without shedding of blood there is no remission) (Heb. ix. 22). These words of St. Paul apply to all religions, in all times and places. The various rituals suppose that the blood of victims has a supernatural power, that it is best of all atonements, the best of all thanksgivings, the best of all prayers. Blood was offered to the Deity in time of great calamities, as well as on the occasion of national rejoicings, before and after a battle, and on the eve of some great event. “The life of the flesh is in the blood,” says Jehovah to His people : “and I have given it to you that you may make atonement with it, upon the altar, for your souls” (Lev. xvii. 11).

2. In every sacrifice we find the idea of substitution. Man acknowledges that his life is forfeited to God. Hence he substitutes in his place some innocent victim, and offers to God the life of that victim as a pledge and surety for his own. Whatever might be our excellence, we are but the creatures of God. The Almighty brought us out of

nothing, and His sovereignty over us is supreme. Born in sin and inclined to evil, we add every day new offences to our original guilt. We squander the gifts and graces of God, and increase daily our terrible debt towards the eternal justice. Destruction and annihilation, then, are the only means by which we can express our forfeiture, and show how completely dependent we are on the Infinite Goodness. Hence the best means, the only means, to pay the debt of our wretchedness is to choose a victim and sacrifice it in our stead. The Jew, when offering a holocaust in the Temple of Jerusalem, was commanded to place his hand on the head of the victim whilst it was being sacrificed, as if to proclaim and testify that this victim was but a substitute for himself, and that he formed but one and the same host with it. The same rite prevailed in Babylonia and Persia. The very choice of the victims, too, shows that they were intended to take the place of man. "The most humane victims were always chosen," says J. de Maistre, and these were domestic or domesticated animals which, by their instincts, their habits, their services, were in constant relation with man.

3. Sacrifice has always been considered as a bond of union, a pledge of alliance, between God and His creatures. When the victim had been immolated, the appeased Deity lavished all sorts of blessings in exchange for the honour received ; absolution and forgiveness were granted, and a compact of peace was concluded. The promises made to Abraham were cemented by sacrifice : "By my own self have I sworn, saith the Lord . . . because thou hast not

spared thy only-begotten son for My sake, I will bless thee . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed " (Gen. xxii. 16-18). The Old Testament or alliance between Jehovah and His people was also sealed and consecrated by sacrifices. Moses read the book of the covenant in the hearing of the people, and he took the blood of the victims and sprinkled it upon the people, and he said : " This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you " (Exod. xxiv. 8). " The blood of sacrifices sanctioned reconciliations and compacts," says Father Grimal. " When two men had offered the same sacrifice, they were allies, and became like two brothers. The bond of religion was even stronger than that of birth " (" *Le Sacerdoce et le Sacrifice*," part i., chap. iv.).

4. In the beginning every individual man was allowed to offer sacrifice to God, but later on the sacrificial functions were reserved for priests or persons specially chosen and consecrated for this high office. The tribe of Levi was set apart by God Himself for the service of the altar, and a true priesthood was constituted in Israel. " Take the Levites out of the midst of the children of Israel, and thou shalt purify them . . . and shalt consecrate them, being offered to the Lord " (Numb. viii. 6, 13). In Chaldæa, Persia, India, Egypt, the priests formed a kind of aristocratic caste. They were rich, learned, powerful, and the natural counsellors of Kings. Everywhere they were considered as the mediators between Heaven and earth, the ministers of reconciliation, the anointed,

the men of God. We read in the Book of Leviticus : " The priest is the greatest among his brethren upon whose head the oil of unction has been poured, and whose hands have been consecrated for the priesthood, and who has been vested with the holy vestments " (Lev. xxi. 10). The ordination, or rather the initiation of the Egyptian priests was made by lustrations, and was preceded by long days of fast and abstinence (Herodotus, ii. 37-81). The Vestals in Rome were consecrated virgins, and formed a real priesthood (Cic., " Pro Domo," 53). The Babylonian priests were initiated by ablutions and sacrifices. The Druids of Gaul were subjected to long years of solitude and study, and in the exercise of their functions they were clothed in white flowing robes (Cæs., " De Bello Gall.," vi.).

5. Sacrifices were generally followed by communion or incorporation with the victim. The rite of communion was not special to the Jews ; it was universal, and was considered as a source of Divine life, a principle of union with the Divinity, the very consummation of the sacrifice. In certain Jewish sacrifices the priests alone partook of the flesh that had been immolated ; in others, both priests and people received communion. The Greeks and Romans never ate the flesh of victims offered in expiation for sin ; but the other sacrifices were always followed by a communion-banquet (Herodotus, i. 132 ; Strabo, xv. ; Xenophon, " Anabasis," vii. 8). The communicant identified himself, as it were, with the victim ; he became incorporated with it. The sacred food quickened and sanctified him. He received a new life, and was possessed by the

Divine spirit. St. Paul warns the first Christians against pagan communion (I Cor. x. 14-21). He lays down the principle that a sacrificial repast unites the communicant to the Deity, and if the Deity is an idol, then communion is an act of idolatry. The Christians who partake of the Body and Blood of the Lord should not incorporate themselves with idols.

The Romans and the Greeks went so far as to make the rite of communion a daily religious act. At the family meal the portion for the god was set apart, and consumed by fire or poured out as a libation. By this offering the rest of the food became sanctified, and received a virtue supernatural and Divine. The family board was like a communion table, and the meal a sacred banquet presided over by the Deity. "*Et mensæ adesse deos*" (Ovid, "*Fasti*," vi. 300).

III.—OUR HIGH-PRIEST AND HIS SACRIFICE.

There is a modernist theory concerning the Priesthood of Jesus Christ that has been ardently taken up by some Protestant schools and scholars (*cf.* Toy, "*Judaism and Christianity*"; Harnack, "*Das Wesen des Christentums*"; Loisy, "*L'Évangile et l'Église*"). This theory teaches that the idea of a Messiah, priest and victim, is an invention of St. Paul, and that the Gospel does not even insinuate that Jesus was substituted for the race, or sacrificed for the sins of men. The concept of a universal redemption by the cross is anti-Christian; it is a deviation from the Gospel, and reason cannot possibly admit that the innocent is sacrificed for the

guilty. Jesus is Our Saviour, not because He paid our debt by His blood—such a bargain would be cruel—but because His example, in the midst of suffering, is for us a lesson of virtue. His death invites us to look beyond the grave for justice and reward. The ardent imagination of St. Paul created the theory of substitution. The old Pharisee, now become the Apostle of the Gentiles, saw a rapprochement, a parallel, between the victims of the Mosaic Law and the death of the gentle Jesus. The first Christians adopted this view, and the newly fangled dogma of redemption was soon received in the whole Church.

This senseless theory runs counter to the inspired word of God, and from beginning to end is in perfect contradiction with the spirit and the letter of the Old and New Testament. Isaias, the prince of prophets, speaking of the Man of Sorrows, expressly declares that He will die for the sins of men. He mentions clearly a substitution made by God Himself. “He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way : and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was offered because it was His own will. . . . He hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors” (Isa. liii. 5 *et seq.*). This text is clear, and there are hundreds of others. The Redeemer promised to the Jews will be a priest and a victim. Predestined by God for sacrifice, He will offer Himself for the iniquities of the world. No

Christian can deny that the sacrifices of the Jews, their rites and ceremonies, were mere shadows and figures intended to prepare men for the New Law. The prophets announced the transmutation of these sacrifices ; they announced a new and eternal priesthood, a new and acceptable sacrifice, a pure host that would be offered up in every nation under Heaven (Isa. i. 11, 13, 14 ; Jer. xxxiii. 17, 26 ; Soph. i. 7 ; Mal. i. 10, 11, iii. 3). " Look at the pavement of the temple," exclaims Bossuet. " Look at the sacerdotal vestments, look at the altar and the sanctuary, all covered with the blood of victims, look at the people of Israel, so many times sprinkled with this blood. All this is cold, if under these shadows faith does not show me the blood of the Lamb shed for the remission of our sins, the blood of the New Testament. If we lose sight of Jesus Christ, all the prophetic Scriptures have no meaning ; they appear full of practices that are devoid of sense. But if we consider the Saviour all is light, all is intelligence, all is reason " (" Sermon pr. le 2^e Dim. après l'Épiph. "). When Christianity announced the institution of a sacrifice, one, universal, and perpetual, there arose no accent of surprise. It seemed as if the human race recognized, at the same time, in this doctrine, its souvenirs and its hopes. Just as the idea of God, the necessary Being, accounts for the existence of all other beings, so likewise the notion of the Christian sacrifice accounts for all the ancient sacrifices " (Gerbet, " Considérations sur le Dogme Générateur de la piété Catholique ").

Our Lord insists on His character of Priest and

Victim ; He says that the Son of Man came " to give His life a redemption for many " (Mark x. 45). He came for that purpose, and for no other. His very name proves it : " Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins " (Matt. i. 21). Hence, at the Last Supper, He mentioned again the sacrifice of substitution and the blood that was to seal the new alliance : " This is the chalice of the New Testament in My blood which shall be shed for you " (Luke xxii. 20).

When, therefore, St. Paul describes so admirably the priesthood of Christ, he does not create a new dogma ; he is but the echo of the inspired writings, and he is very careful to remind the faithful of this fact : " I delivered unto you first of all, which I also received : how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures " (1 Cor. xv. 3). The great Apostle enumerates the characters of a high-priest, and applies them to Our Lord : " Every high-priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin " (Heb. v. 1). (1) Jesus is taken from among men. He is one of the race, the flesh of our flesh, the bone of our bone, our brother, the Son of Man. God did not choose an Angel for this sublime office, " nusquam enim Angelos apprehendit " (Heb. ii. 16). And why ? Because " it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High-Priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people " (Heb. ii. 17). (2) Jesus was ordained or consecrated High-Priest by the Incarnation itself.

His humanity, seized upon by the Divine personality, received an excellence that cannot be surpassed. It was taken possession of by the eternal Word, screened from profanity, exalted, sanctified, set apart, consecrated. He did not take the honour to Himself. At the first moment of His human existence He was a Priest, because His humanity had already received the sacred unction of the Divinity ; He was already the Christ, "the anointed," "Dominus unxit me" (Isa. lxi. 1). We wanted "a High-Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). The whole of antiquity had failed in its efforts to create a holy priesthood. The priest of Jehovah Himself had "to offer sacrifices first for his own sins" (Heb. vii. 27). What four thousand years could not contrive to do was effected by the Incarnation. (3) Our High-Priest is the minister of a sacrifice truly worthy of God's infinite excellence, a sacrifice matchless in purity and unbounded in acceptableness. Hence at His coming into the world, He could say to His Father : " Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not ; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me : holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I : behold I come " (Heb. x. 5, 6, 7). These words sum up the Divine mission of the Redeemer : He came to replace the victims and sacrifices of old by the oblation of His own blood. We must remark here that the first thought of Jesus, the first aspiration of His soul, the first beat of His Sacred Heart, were more than sufficient to redeem millions of worlds. But God, in His infinite wisdom, determined that the price of our ransom should be formally paid by His death on the cross.

The reason for this Divine ordinance was evidently to redeem and save us by the highest and supremest act of worship—namely, sacrifice. All the actions of the Incarnate Word, all the motions of His deified humanity, were performed in view of the sacrifice of the Cross, and formed one sum total with that great act of immolation. He lived with His eyes on Calvary. He knew that the reason of His existence, and the end of His life, was to expiate our sins, and therefore He offered Himself incessantly as a victim to the justice of His Father. “*A partu virgineo effectus hostia*” (Tertullian). It is in this light of priest and victim that we must study Him. That is His true character, and one that gives us the key to all the mysteries and circumstances of His life.

IV.—PERPETUITY OF THE CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE.

The priesthood of Jesus was intended to persevere in His Church till the consummation of time. The Scriptures are very clear on this point. Four hundred years before the coming of Christ the prophet Malachias announced the rejection of the Jewish sacrifices, and the institution of a new sacrifice that would be offered up by all nations : “*I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts : and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation : for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts*” (Mal. i. 10, 11). The religion of the Jews was local ;

it was confined to the race of Israel. But a new and universal religion will come into existence, with a new and universal sacrifice, and the old shadows will vanish away. As the sacrifice of the Cross was offered but once, and in one place alone, it is manifest that the vision of the holy prophet extended beyond Calvary. It was on the night of the Last Supper that our High-Priest instituted the Christian priesthood, and the universal sacrifice. He was for the last time with those Apostles whom He had chosen to continue and perpetuate His work. "I will not leave you orphans" (John xiv. 18). He said: "You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice" (John xvi. 20). No doubt they looked at one another like men who realize that something mysterious is going to happen. It was the last farewell, and farewells are sad and sorrowful. Our Lord knew that the time had come for Him to make His last will. Every one of His words and gestures was watched with eager attention. It was perhaps the most solemn moment of His life, and no one will deny that on such an occasion He was bound to make use of a clear and intelligible language. He therefore took bread and blessed it, and gave it to His disciples, and said: "Take ye, and eat. This is My body." Then He took the cup or chalice wherein was wine, blessed it, and said: "Drink ye all of this. For this is My blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 25, 26). These words had a sacrificial power; the tradition of the Church is unanimous on this point. They really effected what they signified. They mystically separated the Body

and Blood of the Saviour, and placed Him in a state of victim. To complete all this, Jesus appointed His Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests, ministers of the new sacrifice. He gave them power to perform the same wonder, saying : " Do this for a commemoration of Me " (Luke xxii. 19). During the whole of this sublime scene, the words used by the Saviour are clear and simple. We recognize the same God who, on the day of creation, pronounced the omnipotent word which gave life and existence to all things.

Long before this glorious day He had prepared His Apostles and the Jews for the institution of this great sacrifice. When He had multiplied the loaves in the desert, and miraculously fed a great multitude, He clearly mentioned the rite of communion, and represented Himself as a victim Whose flesh and blood were to become the food of a sacrificial banquet : " I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. . . . He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life : and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed " (John vi. 51, 55, 56). On hearing these words, the Jews and some of the disciples were greatly embarrassed ; they murmured or left Him, and walked no more with Him ; a manifest evidence that they understood Him to speak in a literal, and not in a figurative, sense. Jesus, knowing their minds, did not undeceive them, but solemnly repeated the same promise again and again. If therefore the literal sense was not meant and intended by Him, we are compelled to say that He wilfully led into error not only

the Jews, not only the disciples, but many millions of true and faithful followers who, in the course of ages, would worship Him in the sacrament of the Eucharist. During the fifteen centuries which preceded the Reformation, the doctrine of the Real Presence was believed by all Christians in the world ; and ever since the Reformation it has been believed by whole generations of good and holy souls ; by thousands of millions of Christians who have found consolation and hope at the foot of the altar. Can anyone who remembers this, and who believes in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, harbour for a moment the thought that Our Divine Lord allowed His Church, His immortal Spouse, to fall into idolatry, and to worship bread and wine, during so many ages ? Did He not pledge His word that He would be with His Church all days, even to the consummation of the world, and that the gates of hell should never prevail against it ? When He pronounced the sacramental words, " This is My Body, this is My Blood," did He not know that, in consequence of these words, legions of pure and spotless souls, the very flower of the human race, would worship Him under the elements of the Eucharist ? Can we suppose that our fathers who reared our grand cathedrals, who built our noble universities, and who fought for God on so many battle-fields—can we suppose that they were idolaters, worshippers of bread and wine ? No, we cannot suppose it ; the mere thought of it fills our souls with horror.

" Throughout almost the whole land of Protestantism, this beautiful doctrine which gives a sublime character to the Catholic worship, and is a

key to all its magnificent ceremonial, has been utterly banished. The Protestant Church and worship are no longer ennobled and vivified by this life-giving presence of the Word-made-flesh. Christ is banished from His own holy temple; He is no longer in the midst of the children of men where before He delighted to dwell. And the domain of Protestantism presents in its bleak and dreary waste a sad proof of His absence! It is a land of closed churches and hushed bells, of unlighted altars and unstoled priests. No, its condition is still more deplorable. It has not even unlighted altars, it has no altar at all: 'Sacrifice and oblation is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord's ministers, have mourned' (Joel i. 9, 10). Where is there to be found in the land of Protestantism that clean oblation foretold by God's holy prophet? (Mal. i. 2). Where that altar which, St. Paul assures us, the early Christians had: 'We have an altar whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle?' (Heb. xiii. 10). Until Protestantism appeared, with its blighting influence on worship, whoever heard of a religion, Christian or even pagan, the very essence of which did not consist in an external sacrifice?" (Spalding, "Reformation," chap. x.).

CHAPTER VIII

THE MARTYR

I.—HISTORY OF THE PASSION.

THE whole history of the Passion may be summed up in three different tableaux: the arrest of Our Lord in the Garden, His condemnation in the pretorium, His execution on Mount Calvary. After the Last Supper, Jesus went down the hill on which Jerusalem is built, passed the torrent Cedron, and entered into the Garden of Gethsemani. It was about nine o'clock in the night. Then, taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. A strange feeling took possession of His soul, something like the chill or fever of a death-struggle. He soon found Himself plunged into such a sea of horror that a sweat of blood covered His whole body and moistened the ground round about Him. This terrible agony was occasioned principally by the sight of all the sins of men—from the sin of Adam down to the last sin of the last man. All the iniquities of the race, all the crimes and abominations, that have ever soiled the face of the earth, or will ever soil it, were laid upon Him at that moment. They rushed upon Him like furies. His whole being was swallowed up in an ocean of wickedness.

At the same hour, Judas, the fallen Apostle, having received thirty pieces of silver for his sacrilegious bargain, and having made his final arrangements, placed himself at the head of a band of soldiers, and crawled like a snake in the night to betray his Master. He saluted his victim with a smile, and with his impure lips imprinted a kiss on the sacred countenance of the Saviour. The heart of Jesus was wrung more violently by this treacherous kiss than by the severest torments of His Passion. Later on the insolent servants fell on the gentle Lamb, and led Him to the sacrifice. They dragged Him to the residence of the High-Priest, where He was insulted and reviled in a thousand ways ; and when the morning came, He was brought before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to be condemned to death.

What strikes me most, in this first scene of the Passion, is the spontaneousness with which Jesus delivered Himself into the hands of His enemies. By one act of His omnipotent will He might have silenced the rabble, and struck them irremediably with His eternal vengeance. But this was the hour of the Devil and the power of darkness. "O God," exclaims St. Augustine, "how is it possible that Thy love has reached such height, that when I have committed the crime, Thou shouldst have to pay the penalty? I have sinned, and Thou art punished !"

Pilate saw at once that Jesus was innocent. The dignity and majesty of His countenance, the noble expression of His face, the violence and delirium of the crowd, the spite and ill-humour of the Scribes

and Pharisees—all were manifest evidences of the innocence of the Saviour. The governor therefore tried every means in his power to save Him. First he instituted a public trial to set at nought the accusations brought against Him. Then he sent the august prisoner to King Herod, who had long been anxious to meet Him, and who, no doubt, would dismiss the case. Then, again, he opposed Him to a well-known malefactor and murderer, thinking that the choice of the people could not miscarry. After this, he ordered the Divine Victim to be scourged at a pillar, in order to excite the compassion of the crowd. Finally, he washed his hands in the face of the angry multitude, and solemnly protested that he had no share in the murder. But he soon heard the shouts of the Jews: "Crucify Him! crucify Him! . . . If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. . . . His blood be upon us and upon our children." O miserable people! the blood of Christ is upon you. The outcasts of nations, you are now scattered to the winds, everywhere persecuted and everywhere despised.

During the trial of Jesus a very remarkable sentence fell from His sacred lips. Pilate, turning to Him, said: "Knowest Thou not that I have the power to crucify Thee, and I have the power to release Thee?" Our Lord answered: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11). These words show clearly that the death of the Saviour was determined in the council of God. In Heaven, as well as on earth, Jesus was compared to Barabbas—that is, to our wretched humanity—plunged body

and soul in the most shameful degradation. One of the two must die : the Son of God or the children of men. Methinks I hear the Angel of Justice thus addressing the Eternal Father : " O just and mighty God, spare Thy only-begotten Son, and condemn the human race. Man disturbs Thy peace and blasphemes Thy holy Name. Send forth a new deluge, and sweep him away from the face of the earth." But the Angel of Mercy came in his turn and said : " O Father, have pity on man, Thy noble image upon earth. The sacrifice of Thy Son will transform and regenerate the world. Millions of martyrs will follow His footsteps and proclaim Thy glory, millions of virgins and Saints will implant on earth the virtue of Heaven. Thy kingdom will come, and the nations will know Thy holy Name. And one day we shall see before Thy throne a great multitude which no one can number of all nations, tribes and peoples, clothed in white garments, and palms in their hands, and they will sing with us : Benediction and glory and wisdom to our God for ever and ever. O Father, spare the human race." The Eternal Father spared the human race, and condemned His own beloved Son. O infinite condescension ! O mercy without limits !

No sooner had Jesus been condemned to death than He was loaded with His cross, and led to the place of execution, amidst the mockeries of a vile multitude. We have seen and heard drivers of beasts cursing and blaspheming, because the poor animals, being too heavily laden, could not carry their burden. The Son of God was treated even more ignominiously than a beast of burden. In

His very agony He was insulted, reviled, and blasphemed. What He suffered in His body and in His soul during the three hours that He hung upon the cross cannot be expressed in human language. Whilst His strength was ebbing away in streams of blood, He could hear the taunts and insults of the Jews round about His cross. He had taken upon Himself the wickedness of the world ; He had accepted to pay the debt of our fallen race ; and so He became a curse and an execration in the sight of the Most High. The vision of sin and of Hell plunged Him into unutterable agony. The multitude of the damned appeared before Him. He saw their wretchedness, their misery, their despair, and He felt that, so far as they were concerned, His toils, His blood, His death would be in vain. At last a cry pierced the gloom : " Consummatum est " (" It is finished "), and, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost.

At the death of the Saviour there happened something similar to what took place when all the fountains of the deep were broken up, and the deluge overflowed the earth. The blood of redemption became a bath of salvation for the whole world. " Terra, pontus, astra, mundus, quo lavantur flumine." This blood rushed back, like a torrent, reascending the past ages, and wiping away our original disgrace. Then it sprang forward towards the most distant future, blotting out humanity's crimes. It passed over the earth, and the earth trembled. It passed over the tombs, and the tombs yielded their dead. It passed over the rocks, and the rocks were rent. It passed over the sun, and

the sun was darkened, and the darkness shrouded the whole world with a black winding-sheet. Finally, it rose so high that it reached the throne of God Himself, and the wrath of the Eternal was appeased. It crushed down the power of Satan, and opened wide the gates of Heaven. And from that time, from the rising of the sun even to the going down, the name of the Lord is great among the Gentiles.

II.—THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE CROSS.

A God crucified ! Such is the fundamental dogma of Christianity. This dogma supposes such an infinite condescension on the part of God that the infidel is amazed, bewildered, at the mere mention of it, and he refuses to believe. "We preach Christ crucified," says St. Paul, "unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness" (1 Cor. i. 23). Indeed, it was a stumbling-block, and it was folly. But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. i. 25). It is precisely because this dogma is abnormal and extraordinary that I believe it. Man was so utterly lost, he was reduced to such a state of degradation, and plunged into such an ocean of ignominy, that only an extraordinary remedy could possibly save him. Something was required that would strike wonder and amazement into the hearts of men, that would turn the direction of their minds, produce a commotion, and arouse them from their apathy, spiritual and moral. Now the cross supplied this remedy.

There is no doubt that the position of Christianity was at its origin, humanly speaking, hopeless ;

it was desperate. And yet from this desperate position arose the most tremendous of all revolutions in the religious, moral, and intellectual worlds—a revolution, or, rather, a regeneration, a resurrection, such as had never been witnessed before, and will never be witnessed again. Nineteen hundred years have testified to the truth of these words. The cross has renewed the face of the earth. The physical world was created out of nothing; but, behold, Christianity—that world of splendour and magnificence a thousand times more beautiful and wonderful than the material universe—sprang out of a cause that was below nothing—a cause that had no proportion to the effort, but was a stumbling-block, an obstacle, to it—namely, the cross. Napoleon said one day to Fontanes: “Do you know what strikes me most in the history of the world? It is the powerlessness of force to create anything durable.” Napoleon knew the value of his words. But what a wonder to see the greatest, the strongest, the mightiest of all institutions springing up out of weakness! What do I say? Out of death, out of the cross? And that institution is immortal. All the powers of Hell, all the efforts and devices of men, have never been able to destroy it; and after nineteen centuries of existence it is as strong and as young and as vigorous to-day as it was at the beginning of its career. How true it is that “the foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong! And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible,

hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His sight " (1 Cor. i. 27-30).

What a difference there is between human things and things Divine ! Sacred history gives us a glowing account of the conquests of Alexander the Great. " It came to pass, after that Alexander the son of Philip the Macedonian . . . had overthrown Darius King of the Persians and Medes : He fought many battles, and took the strongholds of all, and slew the kings of the earth : And he went through even to the ends of the earth, and took the spoils of many nations : and the earth was quiet before him. And he gathered a power, and a very strong army : and his heart was exalted and lifted up. And he subdued countries of nations, and princes : and they became tributaries to him. And after these things he fell down upon his bed, and knew that he should die. . . . And Alexander reigned twelve years, and he died " (1 Macc. 1-8). He died ! What a conclusion after such a display of glory and magnificence ! And when he had disappeared, his empire crumbled into ruin. The life of Napoleon, the greatest conqueror of modern times, might also be summed up in a few words : Napoleon, the Emperor of France, passed in triumph over the conquered nations of Europe. He defeated the Italians, the Spaniards, the Austrians, the Germans. He won the great battles of Austerlitz, Marengo, and Jena. He gave the crowns of kings to his generals ; and the earth was quiet before him. And after this he was defeated at Waterloo, was sent a prisoner to St. Helena, and he died. Even before his death

his sceptre was broken, and his work came to nought. Such is man. During life he may, by his genius, rise above his fellows, but in the end he must come down to the common level ; and the greater the man, the deeper his fall.

How different is the case with Jesus ! During life He met with humiliations and ignominies, but by His death He conquered the world. His case may be outlined as follows : Jesus the Nazarene was born of the Virgin Mary, in the stable of Bethlehem. He remained thirty years in the company of His mother, discharging little domestic duties, or helping His foster-father at his trade as carpenter. Then He chose twelve fishermen for disciples, and preached His gospel. But He was rejected by His people, and persecuted. Finally, He was condemned to death as a malefactor, and nailed to a cross. He died, and was buried. And after this He rose again from the dead and ascended into Heaven. And He received the nations of the earth for His inheritance, and of His reign there shall be no end.

Is there no room here for wonder ? and what does the unbeliever think of all this ? In his opinion, Jesus is but a man. Well, then, here is a man of low extraction, born in a state of absolute destitution, in a remote corner of an unknown country ; a man belonging to a nation that was despised—a Jew—who also was despised and persecuted ; a man who had to expiate His unpopularity by a death of infamy. This man, despite his humiliations, or, rather, through His very humiliations, has reformed and civilized the whole world ; He has created a new type of humanity, and has become

the God of the proudest and most enlightened nations of the earth. The cross on which that man expired has become the sun of the world ; in its light the darkness of ignorance vanishes away ; the gods of the nations fall into pieces ; the schools of philosophy are confounded ; shameful superstitions are abolished, and slavery and barbarism disappear. This fact shows clearly that the weakness of the cross is stronger than all human power and might.

III.—THE VICTORIES OF THE CROSS.

The cross is the best and most powerful means of regeneration. Its influence on the world is immense. In order to regenerate man and raise him from the state of ignominy to which the pagan world had reduced him, it was necessary to teach him his dignity. Ignorance of self is the beginning of all debasement and decrepitude. The motto of the Greek philosophers, Thales and Socrates, was " *Nosce teipsum* " (" Know thyself ") ; and the same motto was inscribed on the frontispiece of one of the most beautiful temples of Grecian antiquity. In fact, a man who is ignorant of his own dignity thinks and acts as if he had no higher destiny than the beasts of the forest. He has no knowledge of law and duty, no hope of a better life, no notion of good and evil, no standard of morality, no consolation in sorrow, no remorse for crime. Shut out from all that is grand, noble, sublime, he cannot rise above the petty things of the earth ; he crawls upon the dust of this world, he clings to it, and tries by every means in his power to satisfy his animal passions and cravings. That man is a danger to society ;

and we see him in all great national calamities, coming up to the surface with blasphemy on his lips, fury in his eyes, and the torch of revolution in his hand.

How important, then, it is for man to know his end and his dignity ! The cross gives him this knowledge. Look at the Christian who seriously reflects on the great drama of Calvary. The sight of the cross gives him a greater idea of his nobility and grandeur than all the masters and teachers of the world. He realizes the excellence of his immortal soul—that soul which is worth as much as the precious blood of the Son of the living God ; that soul which has been redeemed at so great a price. He realizes that, as a child of God, he is God's companion for all eternity, and the end of His sublimest works. How eloquently does not the cross cry out to him : “ Weak and frail mortal, forlorn exile in a strange land, why do you waste your strength in useless strifes ? why do you run after vanities and trifles unworthy of your great destiny ? Look up to Heaven. Above your head is an eternity of bliss, below your feet an abyss of misery. Watch and pray ! ”

The cross is the Divine standard which God has raised over this world, just as the Admiral at sea hoists and unfurls the flag on the topmost mast of his vessel, as a rallying sign and the central point of action. The cross is the pivot round which everything revolves ; it is the axle of the world. In the midst of revolutions and ruins, in the midst of wrecks of empires and fragments of broken sceptres, the cross remains immovable and unchanged : “ Stat

crux dum volvitur orbis " (St. Augustine). It is the source of all that is great and noble, the principle of all heroisms and martyrdoms. The cross converted the pagan nations, founded the institutions of charity, and uplifted the whole race. Before it had been consecrated by the blood of Christ it was held in abhorrence, as an instrument of ignominy and shame. But Jesus said one day : " And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself " (John xii. 32) ; and lo ! His cross, like a powerful magnet, has attracted all things : the hearts and the souls of men, nations, and ages, Heaven and earth. And when the general assize of the whole human race will be held, at the end of the world, the Judge will be preceded by His cross, as by the sign of His triumph and glory. No longer abhorred and abominated, it has become the reward of honour and bravery. It adorns the diadems of kings, glitters over domes and steeples, and crowns the summit of hills and mountains. Millions of martyrs and hundreds of millions of virgins and Saints have proclaimed the victories of the cross, and the greatest minds of all times and places have embraced it with reverence, gratitude, and love.

It was by the cross that Constantine conquered the enemies of the Christian name, and restored peace to the world. It was the cross that subdued the barbarians when they spread, like a torrent, over Europe, sweeping away and destroying nations and peoples. Leo the Great was armed with the cross when he went forth to meet Attila, the Scourge of God. How beautiful was the cry of

the Crusaders : " God wills it ! The cross ! The cross !" What a thrill of enthusiasm passed over the West when the soldiers of the cross rose by thousands and moved on to the rescue of the Holy Land !

The cross touched the chains of slavery, and broke them asunder. It created the law of charity and fraternity in the world. It called the purest virgins, the flower of the human race, to the rescue of misery and misfortune, and they came forth from castles and cottages, bidding an eternal adieu to earthly things and hopes. They nursed the orphan and the destitute, ministered to the wants of the aged and the poor, watched at the bedside of sickness and contagion, and died, victims of unselfish heroism and true martyrs of humanity.

The cross places the hand of the man of toil in the strong hand of Christ and says to him : " God became an artisan for thy sake ; He earned His bread at the sweat of His brow. Offer Him thy privations and sufferings, and He will change them into a crown of glory, and will reward thee with an eternal felicity."

The cross is laid on the breast of the dying, to allay his terrors and console him in his last agony. And when death has struck its fatal blow and the Christian is fallen asleep in the Lord, when his body has been deposited in the ground, when relations and friends have left the grave, the Cross remains as a pledge of immortality ; it remains like a mother watching over a beloved child, and silently repeating the words of the Crucified : " I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live " (John xi. 25).

IV.—THE CROSS TEACHES US THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

Our Lord, who is “the way and the truth,” tells us that the knowledge of God is eternal life—that is, the necessary means of acquiring eternal life. Men will study the secrets of Nature, they will measure the stars and count their revolutions, but they will neglect the one thing necessary: they will not even give a thought to the Creator of all things. “The cause of all crimes for unhappy mortals,” says a pagan poet, “is the ignorance in which they are of the Divine nature.”

“Heu! primæ scelerum causæ mortalibus ægris
Naturam nescire deum.”

SILVIUS ITALICUS BELL: *Punicum*, IV.

How true that is! But where shall we find the knowledge of God so clearly expressed as on the tree of the cross? What book shall reveal to us the Divine perfections in a brighter light than the book of the cross? A mere glance at the great Victim of Calvary will teach us more about the goodness of God and His justice than all the Angels of Heaven could possibly reveal in centuries.

The knowledge of God's infinite goodness is the mainspring of all regenerations. The pagan world considered the Deity in the light of an angry judge always ready to strike. Hence all the religions of antiquity ended in fatalism. How different would the case have been if men had only known the sublime doctrine: “God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son!” (John iii. 16). “There was once,” says a Doctor of the Church,

“ a king, lord of many kingdoms, who had one only son so deserving of all his affection that he was the delight of his father. This young prince had a slave whom he loved tenderly, and the slave having committed a crime and been condemned to death, the prince offered to die in his place. The father, who was jealous of justice, accepted the change, and he sacrificed his beloved son in order that the slave might escape the punishment due to his crimes ” (St. Alphonsus). This fact is related in the Gospel, where we read that the Son of God chose to pay by His death the penalty due to the sins of men. But how different is our case from that of the slave ! The distance between us and God is simply infinite. In His sight we are less than atoms. Our poverty and powerlessness are absolute. To crown all, we are not only the slaves of God, but His enemies. We have offended Him ; we have insulted Him. We have leagued ourselves with the devils of Hell ; we are wretches condemned to eternal misery, brands torn from the burning furnace. And yet God condescends to come from Heaven and to die for us on a cross ! What a mystery of love ! “ Frail and guilty mortals as we are ! ” exclaims Chateaubriand, “ let us ask, not our understandings, but our hearts, how a God could die for man ? ” (“ Genius of Christianity ”). The cross conveys to our minds an idea of God’s condescension and mercy which is truly infinite and which cannot possibly be gathered from any other source. The Almighty shed all His blood to expiate our sins ; He does not wish the death of the sinner, but his conversion. His love for us has

no limit, no bounds. This thought cannot fail to raise the courage of the poor sinner. Like the prodigal, he will return to His Father, and in His loving embrace will recover his innocence. For those who believe in the cross the sin of despair is impossible. It can only be the sin of a fool. A man was once dying after a whole life spent in crime, a whole life lost ! The thought of the judgments of God filled his soul with terror and dismay, and he fell into despair. A priest came, and placed the cross on his lips ; he kissed it, and his heart was softened, and he was saved. There is no crime so enormous that cannot be forgiven, no sinner so utterly depraved that cannot be pardoned. How often when a criminal, sorrowful and repentant, dies on the scaffold a death of public infamy, how often does it not happen that Angels of Heaven are hovering about the scene of horror, ready to take away his soul, and carry it to the bosom of God ! The good thief on the cross was canonized by Our Lord Himself : " This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise " (Luke xxiii. 43). He had spent his life in crime, he had forgotten his soul ; the end had come—an end worthy of such a life—and at the last moment the virtue of the cross changed him into a Saint.

We read in the Life of Cardinal de Cheverus that one day, whilst preaching before Protestants on the veneration of the cross, he exclaimed : " Let us suppose, my friends, that a noble-hearted man, seeing the knife of an assassin ready to strike you, throws himself between you and your murderer, and receives the fatal blow. Let us suppose that he dies a victim of his self-sacrifice, and by his death

saves your life. An artist, wishing to reproduce on canvas this sad but glorious scene, represents the dying man all covered with wounds and bathed in his blood, expiring at your feet. Then he offers you this picture as a souvenir of a heroism that can have no return. Will you not value this picture more than all treasures? Will you not press it to your heart and cover it with your tears? My friends, you have in this illustration the reason of the Catholic devotion to the holy cross." At these words the audience was moved; the preacher took the cross, and the Protestant dissenters came with their Catholic friends to kiss and reverence the figure of the Crucified.

But if the cross manifests the goodness of God, it manifests also His justice. In the Hell of Virgil the damned soul is heard to say: "Be warned, and learn justice; God is not despised in vain"—"*Discite justitiam moniti et non temnere deos*" ("Æneid," lib. vi.). Theologians and philosophers have written volumes on the justice of God, but all their learned dissertations are perfect darkness compared with the brightness that issues forth from the cross. In the light of that cross we can see and understand how terrible, how inflexible, how inevitable is that mighty justice which can only be appeased by the death of a God. The spotless Lamb of God has clothed Himself with the shadow of sin; He has taken on Himself the iniquities of the world, and He must be mercilessly butchered and sacrificed. No Angel, no creature, no accumulation of Angels or creatures, could possibly pay the debt of man; an infinite expiation alone could satisfy the wrath of God.

PART III
HIS WORK

CHAPTER I

ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE WORLD

I.—THE ENTERPRISE.

AN old chronicler relates that when St. Peter first arrived in Rome to establish there the throne of the Fisherman, he met an old pagan, who thus addressed him :

“ ‘Stranger, may I know what brings you to Rome? I might perhaps render you some service.’

“ ST. PETER : I come to announce the unknown God, and substitute His worship for that of idols.

“ THE PAGAN : Indeed ! But this is quite new to me. What is your country ?

“ ST. PETER : I belong to a race of men who are despised and held in execration. I am a Jew.

“ THE PAGAN : Perhaps you are a man of high standing and great repute in your nation.

“ ST. PETER : Look at those fishermen mending their nets yonder on the bank of the Tiber : I am one of them. I used to fish in a lake of my country in order to earn my daily bread. I am poor, and have neither gold nor silver.

“ THE PAGAN : But after you left your country you frequented perhaps the schools of philosophy. You expect much from your eloquence.

" ST. PETER : I am ignorant, unlettered.

" THE PAGAN : So far your enterprise seems to me a difficult one. But I suppose the worship of that unknown God must be very attractive.

" ST. PETER : The God whom I preach died on a cross between two thieves.

" THE PAGAN : And what doctrine are you going to announce from so strange a God ?

" ST. PETER : A doctrine repugnant, and even revolting, to nature and to the passions—the mystery of one God in three persons ; the belief in an everlasting punishment for the wicked ; the practice of humility, charity, chastity, mortification, and penance.

" THE PAGAN : And you intend to preach and propagate this doctrine in Rome first ? And then ?

" ST. PETER : Throughout the whole world.

" THE PAGAN : And for how long a time ?

" ST. PETER : Till the end of the world.

" THE PAGAN : By Jove ! this is a great enterprise ! I think you had better begin to gain to your cause some powerful protectors, princes, and emperors ; but I do not imagine that you count the Cæsars among your followers ?

" ST. PETER : I come to tell them that human grandeur is like a little smoke scattered abroad by the wind ; that the slave is the equal of his master ; and that it is more difficult for the rich man to be saved than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

" THE PAGAN : Do you imagine that you will succeed in your enterprise ?

" ST. PETER : I do not imagine it, I am sure of it.

Look yonder at the Vatican hill. My successors will have their residence there, and from their palace they will rule the whole world.

"THE PAGAN: Do you not see that the emperors will turn against you? And what will you do then?"

"ST. PETER: I will lay down my life.

"THE PAGAN: That is the most likely thing of all that you have said. Good-bye. I enjoyed your conversation, and will have great pleasure to recount your story to my friends in the Forum."

The establishment of Christianity in the world is the most stupendous fact in all history. It is a fact which human reason is powerless to explain; it is a miracle so great, so extraordinary, so overwhelming, that it brings conviction to the mind, and not unfrequently forces the unbeliever himself to believe. Hence the words of St. Augustine: "Either Christianity was established with miracles or without miracles. If it was established with miracles, then it is Divine, since God alone can perform miracles; if without miracles, then it is the greatest of all miracles, and therefore it comes from God."

Let us place ourselves in the state of mind of an unbeliever who discredits revelation and denies the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Let us take Christianity at its birth, when it was all summed up in the cross; let us divest it of all its splendour, covering our eyes and blinding ourselves against its inexpressible brightness. Let us forget for a moment its sublime system of morality which has regenerated the world. Let us place a wall of iron between us and its Doctors, Saints, and virgins. Let us over-

look the fact that it is honoured by kings, potentates, scientists, and statesmen ; that it has promoted science and art, and civilized nations and peoples. Let us ignore all this, and strip it of all its glories, of all its achievements, and of its very existence. Nothing remains but the cross planted on the summit of Mount Calvary. There is Christianity in the bud : the cross stained with the blood of the Crucified, the cross an object of horror and execration, and instrument of infamy. On one side, then, the cross, and on the other the pagan world, with its vices and turpitudes, its scandals and ignominies, the pagan world rotten to the core, and falling piecemeal, like a decayed corpse, the world of Nero, of Heliogabalus, those monsters acclaimed and worshipped by that vile multitude whose savage instincts craved and cried only for two things : *panes et circenses*—bread and bloody spectacles. And let it be remembered that this shameful degradation was not a transitory phenomenon : it was not an ephemeral convulsion, one of those sudden and violent fits that come and go ; it was a real state and condition of things, firmly established, and sanctioned by law, custom, and religion, consecrated by the observance of ancestors and the weight of centuries. Now, to that degraded humanity, to that putrid world, the Son of Man sent His Apostles. He wished to substitute a new race, pure and undefiled, for the old. He wished to create and mould a new world altogether. He sent them to sweep away the cesspool of human prevarication, and replace it by Christian perfection and integrity. He commanded them to tell that

wicked world to renounce its vices, its pleasures, the worship of its idols, and all the practices that were bound up and associated in such a way with the daily routine of life that they had become an absolute necessity. He commissioned them to tell those depraved heathens, not only to forsake the vices that were so dear to them, but to crush them, to hate and abhor them, and to replace them by rigid, pitiless, and inexorable virtues that had not even been heard of before. He ordered them to recast the whole body of pagan theology and philosophy, to overthrow the statues of the gods and goddesses, and to put an end to their impure worship; He authorized them to impose a new creed, full of the most astounding and impenetrable mysteries—the belief in a God crucified; the belief in the resurrection of the flesh; the belief in the real presence of God under the appearance of bread and wine. And these virtues and mysteries He wished to impose, not on a few chosen souls, but on the whole world, not for a time, but for all ages. And all this for what? For a reward to be obtained after death! And on what authority? On what security and guarantee? Because a Jew who died on a cross, and who pretended to be the Son of God, had revealed this new creed and claimed for it the most unreserved and absolute obedience. Good heavens! What an enterprise! For an unbeliever can there be anything more incredible, more improbable, more impossible, more absurd? Let any man of sound judgment enter deeply into this subject, let him reflect, ponder, examine. This enterprise is immense in its extent, infinite in its

consequences. It is beautiful, no doubt, and even sublime, in its object, but in its execution it has not the least human chance of success. It is bound to end in ridicule and failure. Any reasonable man will evidently come to this conclusion. The world had witnessed before, and applauded too, the noble efforts of a few great souls who had endeavoured to lift up the fallen race from its downward tendency ; but their efforts ended in failure. And yet these men never worked on such an amazingly absurd scale as the Hero of the Gospel. Their endeavours were confined to their own age or their own country ; the means they adopted were the very best that could be had ; and still their work was always marked with the stamp of dissolution. Christ's work, on the contrary, embraced all nations and all times. " Going, therefore, teach ye all nations. . . . Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world " (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). The means He employed could not possibly be more unsuitable ; and yet history has never recorded such a gigantic success !

II.—THE MEANS AND THE OBSTACLES.

I. *The Means.*

Our astonishment reaches its height when we reflect on the means used by Christ to carry out His mighty design. It would seem that for an undertaking of such magnitude He should have chosen men of a superior order—men of means and renown, men remarkable for their birth, their education, their talents, or their experience, men

who were polished orators, clever politicians, or learned philosophers. We delight in being the disciples of illustrious men ; we are ashamed of ignorant teachers. Who, then, were the preachers of this new doctrine ? Who were the soldiers of this mighty conquest ? Twelve fishermen, poor and ignorant ; twelve fishermen timid and trembling at the least danger, and whose leader had but a few days before denied his Master, terrified by the voice of a maidservant. Such is the army of the Crucified. It must be manifest to all that the obscurity and ignorance of these twelve Jews could only be an obstacle to the new religion, and an obstacle that would inevitably bring about its ruin. One has reason indeed to be astounded when, abstracting altogether from the Divinity of Jesus Christ, he assists in thought at the mustering of the little band and learns the extent of its commission. But that is not all. Where is the strategy of these uncouth soldiers ? What are their orders, their instructions ? Listen. " Behold I send you as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes ; and salute no man by the way " (Luke x. 3, 4). " Whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your word : going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet " (Matt. x. 14). " When they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another. . . . Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul " (Matt. x. 23, 28). " They will lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, dragging you before kings and governors, for My Name's sake. . . . And

some of you they will put to death. And you shall be hated by all men for My Name's sake" (Luke xxi. 17). "But have confidence, I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33). Faithful to the instructions of their Master, the twelve fishermen set out for the conquest of the world, wandering over immense territories and preaching their God crucified. There can be no doubt that the Founder of Christianity purposely selected for His work the weakest and, humanly speaking, the most unsuitable instruments that could be found. He purposely chose and adopted the very means which a man of ordinary common prudence would have rejected; and He rejected those which the same man would have chosen. What does the unbeliever think of this preposterous generalship? Rejecting all that is supernatural and miraculous, the infidel has to face the bare facts and to find a natural explanation for them. But here there is no possible explanation; any man of sound judgment will agree to this. The Apostles were neither diplomats nor philosophers; they had no worldly advantage of any kind, nothing to credit them in the estimation of men. On the contrary, their nationality, their low extraction, their want of education, their ignorance of the world, their timidity, their awkwardness and inelegance, were insuperable impediments to the success of their mission. Besides, their Master promises and announces to them nothing but sufferings, humiliations, and crosses. He exacts from them a mode of life that is austere in the extreme and truly terrible to Nature. In a word, He binds them to Himself by means and prospects

which by their nature should have disgusted them, and prevented them from serving under Him. Let any one of the philosophic or religious charlatans of the present day take example from the Son of Man ; let him wander, some bright and sunny afternoon, along the shores of Sydney Harbour or by the banks of the River Seine, and there let him choose twelve hardy fishermen, and send them to convert the world to some new-fangled system or creed, with no other prospect but hunger and thirst, suffering and death, and what will be the result ? Let him try it for once ; he will not try again.

2. *Obstacles.*

What obstacles did the Apostles encounter on their way ? All the " gates " or powers of Hell. The Jews expected a Messias, a Saviour, a Conqueror, who would eclipse all the kings of the earth by his power, his greatness, and magnificence ; a mighty monarch who would be the ruler of the world. And how can they recognize him in the Crucified of Calvary ? The princes of their nation, their scribes, priests, and Pharisees, had condemned Jesus to a death of infamy ; how can they now fall prostrate before Him, and acknowledge Him as their God and the God of their fathers ? But the difficulty was still greater for the Gentiles or heathens. Their religion was so easy, so convenient, so fascinating ! Their worst actions were sanctioned by the example of the gods ; all their passions were deified. It was the religion of their country and of their fathers ; a religion of pleasure

and of enjoyment ! How can they exchange it for that of the cross ? How can they abolish their solemnities, renounce their habits and customs, in order to embrace a religion of penance and of self-sacrifice ? How can they forsake the worship of their heroes for that of a crucified Galilean ? The Jews were hated by all nations ; the Galileans were abhorred by other Jews. A Jew ! A Galilean ! The name alone was an object of execration. But a Jew, a Galilean *crucified* ! If they change their religion for that of the twelve fishermen, they will have to be honest, humble, charitable ; they will have to forgive offences and to love their very enemies ; they will have to bear insults without murmur, to be chaste even to the banishing of an evil thought, and, finally, they will have to remain faithful to the new creed, even at the cost of their very lives. Those who reflect on this difficulty will find it insoluble, insurmountable. The following considerations will throw a new light on this interesting fact.

III.—THE STRUGGLE AND THE SUCCESS.

After the first Pentecost, when the Jews saw that great multitudes followed the Apostles and embraced the Christian faith, they discussed in their Council the question of crushing the Church in the bud, and of putting the disciples to death. But a Doctor of the Law called Gamaliel, rising up, said : “ Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do, for before these days men rose up and drew away the people after them ; they perished, and their followers were scattered and brought to

nothing. Now therefore refrain from the disciples of Jesus, and let them alone, for if this work be of men, it will come to nought, but if it be of God, you cannot overcome it, lest perhaps you be found even to fight against God." The Church bravely sustained the test of Gamaliel, and, although attacked and persecuted everywhere, came out of all struggles with reawakened vitality. Jean Jacques Rousseau sums up the establishment of Christianity in the following remarkable words: "After the death of Jesus Christ, twelve poor fishermen, or artisans, undertook to instruct and convert the world. Their method was simple; they preached without affectation, but with a sincere heart, and of all the miracles with which God honoured their faith, the most striking was the holiness of their life. Their disciples followed their example, and the success was prodigious. The pagan priests became alarmed. They told the princes that the State was in danger because the offerings had diminished. The philosophers, who could find no profit in a religion that preached humility, united their efforts to those of the priests. Mockeries and insults fell like hail everywhere on the new sect; persecutions began, but these persecutions only succeeded in accelerating the progress of that religion which they wanted to destroy. All the Christians ran to martyrdom, and all the nations ran to baptism. The history of these primitive times is a continual prodigy" ("Response au roi de Pologne," 1793, tome xiv., p. 262).

The success of the twelve fishermen was as prompt as it was complete. On the morning of the first Pentecost they engaged in struggle with the syna-

gogue of the Jews, in the very heart of Jerusalem. St. Peter, the first Pope, converted 3,000 men by his first discourse, and a few days later 5,000 more. And who were these new converts? Strangers who had come to worship in Jerusalem out of every nation under Heaven, so that the Church became Catholic or universal from the start. These strangers brought back to their homes the fervour of their faith, and became the apostles of their countries. The synagogue struggled awhile, and then fell, writhing in pain, at the foot of the cross. The generation that had witnessed the death of Christ witnessed also the abomination of desolation standing in the Holy Places; the ruin of Jerusalem; the destruction of the temple; and the scattering of the Jews throughout the whole world.

Long before this final consummation, the Apostles had invaded the Roman Empire, that cruel monster which lorded it over all the conquered nations of the earth, and which was ready to wield its immense power against the defenceless followers of Christ. For many years the battle raged, fierce, terrible, unrelenting. Wealth and power, the passions and the sword, calumny and ridicule, all came in turn to strike a blow at the new religion. The Apostles died in this unequal struggle, but they had lighted a flame that could not be extinguished. In vain did the kings of the earth stand up, and the princes meet together against the Lord and against His Christ. In vain did they attempt to drown the Church in the blood of her children. In vain did they send their armies to the four corners of the globe to put out the flambeau of the faith. In vain

did they chase the early believers from the surface of the earth, and compel them to hide themselves in the dark caverns of the catacombs. Christianity passed on and conquered. And so rapid was this conquest that ten years after the first Pentecost St. Peter could address an epistle to the dispersed faithful of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, and twenty-four years after the same Pentecost, St. Paul, writing to the Romans, could declare that their faith—that is, the faith of the Romans—was announced in the *whole* world. So rapid was this conquest that, forty years after the death of St. Paul, one of the officers of the Emperor Trajan, writing to his royal master, declared that the religion of the Christians had gained the cities, the islands, and the rural districts, and one century later Tertullian exclaimed: “We are but of yesterday, and already we fill your cities, your camps, your council-halls, the palace, the senate, the forum; we leave you only your temples. If we were to withdraw from you, the Empire would be a desert” (“Apology”). In addition, if we reflect that in those dreadful times to be a Christian was to be a candidate for martyrdom, and that millions of Christians of every age, sex, and condition, had to confess their faith in the amphitheatres, where they were torn to pieces and devoured by wild beasts, or in the midst of racks and blazing furnaces, then we are placed in the presence of a fact which no man can explain, and for which no sophistry can account.

IV.—STABILITY OF CHRISTIANITY.

But of all wonders the greatest is the unshaken stability of the work of the twelve fishermen. The Church once founded can never perish. He who said one day : " Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," said also : " Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." He pledged His immortal word that all the efforts of men, and all the assaults of Hell, would never prevail against His Church. That Church is truly the house built on the rock : " And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock " (Matt. vii. 25). All the traitors and renegades, from Judas Iscariot in the first century to the Pilates and Herods of the present time, have wished and hoped to see the day when the Church would fall to rise no more, but that day will never come. In the year 112 Pliny the Younger wrote to Trajan, the Emperor of Rome : " Before long the sect of the Christians will be crushed, and we shall hear no more of this God crucified." Trajan and Pliny are dead, and the God crucified has received the nations for His inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for His possession. Two centuries later the Emperor Diocletian attempted to drown the Church in the blood of martyrs, and received the high-flown title of " Destroyer of the Christian name." Diocletian is dead, and the Christian name is revered and honoured throughout the whole world. Julian the Apostate, another Emperor of Rome, boasted one

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day of his approaching victory over "the Galilean." But, as the Solitary prophesied, the Galilean was preparing a coffin for Julian. Julian is dead, and the Galilean is praised and worshipped by the most enlightened nations of the earth. Lactantius, who has been called the Christian Cicero, describes admirably, in his immortal work "*De Mortibus Persecutorum*," the folly, the weakness, and the impotence of all the efforts directed against Christianity. He shows how the Crucified defends His immortal Church against the fury of Hell; how He shatters with His mighty hand the impious designs of His enemies, and how He bears down with resistless violence on all those who oppose His will, and breaks them into pieces like a potter's vessel. In the fifth century Attila, the Scourge of God, and the other barbarian chiefs, poured their savage hordes over the rich provinces of the Roman Empire, crushing, destroying, and annihilating all existing institutions, and, like an impure torrent, sweeping over nations and peoples. Attila is dead, and the Church has regenerated and baptized the barbarians, changed them into gentle lambs, infused into their hearts the love of God and of men, and through them has founded the Christian nations of Europe. In the seventeenth century Mohammed IV., the powerful Sultan of Constantinople, renewed the oath of his predecessors to go and feed his horse in the Church of St. Peter at Rome. With an army of 300,000 Turks he invaded the provinces of the Danube, and threatened Christianity with destruction and ruin. Mohammed is dead, and Christianity, after a toilsome existence of nineteen hundred years, is still

alive, and does not show the least sign of decline or dissolution. Voltaire, who styled himself the mocker of Christ, and who was the leader of infidelity in the eighteenth century, wrote one day to one of his friends : " I am tired of hearing that twelve men were able to found the Christian religion ; I want to show the world that one man alone is sufficient to destroy it. In twenty years' time the Galilean will not be heard of." Twenty years afterwards Voltaire died in despair, asking for a priest and the last rites and consolations of that religion which he had so impiously blasphemed, but no priest was allowed to approach him. Voltaire is gone, but the Galilean is still heard of, and the Church which He founded is still ready for new conquests and new triumphs. The modern enemies of Christianity will meet the same fate as their predecessors. They are far less formidable than the persecutors and scoffers of the past, and their power to do harm is less apparent. The Church will consign them to their graves, and their memory shall perish. How true are the words of the famous Calvinist, Theodore de Beze : " The Church is an anvil which has worn out all hammers !" After so many centuries her vitality has never diminished, her numbers are increasing by millions every year, and her influence on societies and nations is immense. Truly the words of Jesus Christ to Simon Peter have been well verified : " Thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it " (Matt. xvi. 18). All the attacks directed against the Church have only contributed to strengthen her position in the world,

and convince her very enemies that she is immortal. "Along her pathway in history Empires have arisen, flourished for a time, and then crumbled into ruins. Dynasties have changed, or have been extinguished ; thrones have tottered and fallen ; sceptres have been broken ; crowns have mouldered into dust ; but she has survived all ; and she still stands up erect and vigorous in the world . . . not only living herself, but bountifully bestowing of her exuberant life upon the nations of the earth. . . . Christ is her Bridegroom, and she is His chosen Bride, ' without spot, without wrinkle,' all glorious and undefiled ; a Divine and blooming Bride, who knows no old age, and feels no decay, ' doomed to death, but fated not to die.' She has walked the world lovingly and patiently, bearing her crown of thorns, like her heavenly Bridegroom ; but like Him she bears a charmed life, and cannot be conquered by death. Immortality is written upon her brow, and she will wear the wreath for evermore, in spite of the world, the devil, and the flesh ! A pilgrim of faith and of love, with her home in the Heavens, she asks only a free passage through the world ; and her omnipotent Bridegroom will see that she obtains it, whether men will it or not " (Spalding, " Introduction to the History of the Church," by Darras).

V.—THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD.

Every effect supposes a cause. The harmony of the universe and the beauty of Nature show forth the glory, the wisdom, and the power of the Creator. But besides the world of Nature, there is another world far more wonderful, far more beautiful, than

the Heavens and the earth—namely, the Christian world. The Christian world covers the face of the globe, from East to West, from North to South. It fills the universe with living societies, and monuments, and memories, that will excite the admiration of all ages. It extends to all nations, tribes, and peoples, and speaks through innumerable tongues. Now comes the momentous question: Is the Christian world the work of man? Reason answers emphatically, No; it is the work of God. Read the book of history, and you will see religious and intellectual societies springing up into existence, creating excitement for a while, and then dying, to rise no more. There are, indeed, religions in the East that have remained in existence for centuries—Buddhism, Lamaism, Mohammedanism—but they appeal to the lowest passions, and maintain themselves, through torpor and ignorance, in the midst of motionless and apathetic nations. The light of European civilization would dispel them like the shadows of the night. Besides, they are essentially local. For a man to dream of a society that would absorb all nations, to publish a code of doctrines impervious to reason, and to impose on the whole world a system of morality contrary to the human passions—for a man to dream of such a thing would be an absurdity and a folly! The difficulty becomes incomparably greater if the founder of a sect claims not only obedience, absolute and unreserved, but also love, supreme and heroic; because it is a fact of experience that, even when a man succeeds, during life, in conquering a few hearts, he is soon forgotten when he enters the oblivion of the grave.

Look at the Christian world. Jesus Christ, its founder, is also its life, its soul, its alpha and omega. Millions of the purest of human hearts, and of human souls, the most beautiful, are bound to him by ties that are stronger than death, and a love that is immortal. He is their strength, their hope, their father, their spouse, their God. If the world of Nature had a thought and a voice of its own, it would cry out : " He made us, and not we ourselves " (Ps. xcix.). That thought and that voice are not wanting to the Christian world, and every day innumerable tongues proclaim the great truth : " Jesus Christ made us, and not we ourselves. I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God." I have never understood why apologists who insist so much on the other proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord hardly mention this overwhelming affirmation of the Christian world. It is an omission much to be regretted, because there is no demonstration more easily understood, more popular, or better suited to the people, than the testimony of millions of voices continually rising from the earth in an immense harmony, and repeating the words of the Creed : " I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Of all testimonies, this solemn affirmation is the greatest, the most convincing, the most indisputable, the most incontrovertible, because it is enlightened, sincere, disinterested, and universal.

No society in the world can boast of so many bright intelligences, so many brilliant minds, so many distinguished philosophers and savants, as Christianity. These men are not only believers, they are searchers, inquirers. They study everything, dis-

cuss everything. They investigate the monuments of the past. They verify dates, scrutinize the sources of knowledge, and dive into the secrets of Nature. They fill the highest places in the great universities of the world. Look at them, and you will see the flame of genius in their eyes. They are of all times and places ; they belong to all generations ; and their great army stretches over the field of twenty centuries. Now, these men, these illustrious Christians, after having reached the utmost limits of human knowledge, tell us that they would not believe if they were not compelled to by the force of truth.

The affirmation of the Christian world is sincere. It possesses eminently that integrity and fairness, that honesty and candour, which are the sisters of truth. Where shall we find such lofty ideals, such high aspirations, so much probity, so much respect for right and justice, as in the Christian world ? Think of those legions of pure and virtuous souls who have flourished in the garden of the Church ? Think of those millions of Saints who have carried to a sublime extravagance the love of God and of men ? If the honest word of a true gentleman brings conviction to the mind, what shall we say of the word of a Saint, whose soul is transfigured by virtue ? What shall we say of the great voice of all the Saints and martyrs, and of the whole Christian world crying out to all ages : " I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God " ?

This affirmation is disinterested. It does not spring from any human motive, far less from egoism or self-love. Consider the heroes of Christi-

anity : the missionaries who leave their home and country, in order to spend their lives with degraded savages and other outcasts of humanity ; the Sisters of Charity who, in the flower of their age, bid an eternal adieu to the pleasures and enjoyments of the world, and bury themselves with the orphan and the needy ; the martyrs who lay down their lives in the midst of excruciating tortures ; the religious who sell what they have, and give to the poor, in order to embrace a life of renunciation, penance, and self-sacrifice. What profit can they expect, what advantage can they derive in the world from their sacred faith ? Nothing but humiliation, misery, and the cross. How eloquent, then, is their voice when they say : " We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God " ! And let us not forget that their belief is the very source of their heroism and the secret of their virtue.

Finally, the affirmation of the Christian world is universal. It is not confined to a nation or to an age ; it extends to all nations and to all ages. Always and everywhere you hear the same voice proclaiming the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Always and everywhere the Son of Man receives the adoration which is due to God alone. Our old cathedrals, our magnificent temples, our beautiful ceremonial, our masses, our crosses, our invocations and prayers, all these things cry out in a tone that cannot be mistaken : " I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

The affirmation of the Christian world, then, has a force of demonstration which is irresistible. Scoffers of religion, you believe, against all appear-

ances, that the earth on which you dwell revolves on its own axis, and at a frightful speed. You believe the luminous points which are sparkling in the vault of Heaven are gigantic worlds rolling in the immense regions of space. You believe in the events of the past which are wrapped up in the embrace of history. You believe in the existence of far-off lands and cities which you have never seen ; and why do you hesitate to accept the testimony of the most trustworthy of all witnesses—the Christian world ?

CHAPTER II

EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE WORLD

I.—IN THE MORAL ORDER.

IN order to understand the revolution produced by Christianity in the moral order, let us cast a rapid glance at the state of the world before the coming of Christ. Men had lost all idea of the true God. In some places they worshipped gods of stone and wood ; in others the sun, the moon, and the stars ; in others vile and unclean animals ; in others fanciful heroes, who were the personification of vice, and whose example justified all crimes. Magic, sorcery, and witchcraft, were the order of the day. Spells, charms, omens, communication with the dead, dreams, and all sorts of vain observances filled the pagan rituals, and formed an essential part in the degraded worship of those times. The grave Romans, whether legislators, statesmen, generals, or Emperors, had recourse to divination, and consulted the entrails of victims in all the important events of life. In time of war a great number of birds were carried in cages for divining purposes, and before engaging in battle the general-in-chief scattered before them a handful of grain. If they rushed towards it with avidity, it was a presage of

victory ; but if they refused to eat it, it was a bad omen, and the engagement had to be abandoned. Thus the lives of thousands of men depended on the issue of these ridiculous observances (Darras, " Histoire de l'Église," vi. époque).

In the family (if we can call it a family) the father was a tyrant, a despot, to whose caprices everyone had to yield ; the wife was ill-treated, betrayed, repudiated, sold, according to the whims of her master. The child who was born deformed was mercilessly done to death by the very author of his life. In the city of Lacedemon weak or deformed children were thrown into a ditch by command of the magistrates charged with the regulation of births. It was strictly forbidden to rear and nourish them. As for other children, if they were not wanted they were either exposed, or sold, or killed.

Slavery was the common law, and the slave was nothing more than a beast of burden, whose life and existence depended entirely on the will of his master. The Emperor Augustus sacrificed in one day 6,000 slaves. On another occasion he ordered a slave to be crucified because the poor creature had, without his sanction, killed and eaten a quail. Vedius Pollion threw a slave into a pond to serve as food to his *murænas*, or sea-eels, because he had quite unconsciously broken a precious vase. The slaves who cultivated the ground were chained by the foot, and the only pittance allowed them was a little bread, with salt and water. When a master was murdered, all the slaves who were in his house at the time were condemned to death. The number of slaves in the Roman Empire was 120 millions,

whilst the slave-holders were only six millions. In Rome, Athens, and Sparta, the most civilized cities in the world, there were 200 slaves to every free man, and there were cases of simple Roman citizens possessing as many as 20,000 slaves. Hence the well-known words of Seneca, "Woe to us, if our slaves ever come to count their masters" (Seneca, "De Clem.," cap. i. 24). Slavery was maintained by war. Julius Cæsar reduced to slavery 4,000 Helvetians whom he had defeated in battle, and he ordered the hands of 3,000 more to be cut off. A prisoner of war was either killed or reduced to slavery. *Væ victis!* As a rule, they were sold at auction in the forum or reserved for the arena, where they were devoured by wild beasts.

What could we not say of the gladiators who had to fight and die in the amphitheatre for the amusement of the populace? During the reign of Claudius the Roman people witnessed the awful spectacle of 19,000 gladiators slaughtering one another on the Lake Fucinus. The historian Tacitus, who relates the fact, says that it was a grand and beautiful sight ("Ann.," lib. xii.). Before engaging in their bloody strife, the victims saluted the Emperor with the words, "Hail, Cæsar! Those who are about to die salute thee!" After the triumph of Trajan over the Dacians the public games lasted twenty-three days, and during that time 6,000 gladiators lost their lives. The Emperor Titus, wishing to celebrate worthily his father's birthday, ordered 3,000 Jews to be cast to the wild beasts (Josephus, "De Bello Jud.," lib. vii.), and it is a well-known fact that Caligula fed the lions

intended for the games of the circus with human flesh (Suet. "Vita Cal."). The same Emperor wished that the whole Roman people had but one head, that he might strike it off with one blow (*id.*).

Our poor humanity was fast rushing to utter destruction. Those incessant supplies of human victims would inevitably exhaust the reserves and hasten the annihilation of the race. Besides, there was no morality in the world, no idea of virtue, no modesty, no taste but for vice and shame, no craving but for bread and blood. On the festivals of Bacchus prizes were given to the deepest drinkers (Döllinger, "The Gentile and the Jew," ii. 131). A Roman called Clodius dissolved in acid a precious pearl of inestimable worth, and swallowed it. Caius Cæsar contrived to consume in one gigantic banquet the annual revenue of three provinces. Apicius, after having squandered millions in sumptuous feasts and entertainments, committed suicide, saying that a Roman could not live on a rent of 200,000 lib. Self-destruction was the last end and consummation of a disorderly life. Cicero, one of the greatest sages of pagan antiquity, exalts suicide to the rank of a virtue. Of the fifty great men whose deeds are recorded by Plutarch, forty either committed self-murder or they died by poniard and poison (Darras, "Histoire de l'Église," c. 7, vi. époque).

The monster of paganism is thus revealed to us in all its frightful deformity. Now, what hero felled this horrid giant to the ground and crushed the head of this hideous beast? It was the Crucified of Calvary, Jesus, the Son of Man. If we look round and consider the present state of things, we

see at a glance that a great change has taken place in the world. Christ has regenerated the race. In order to raise man from his profound degradation, it was necessary (1) to offer him a perfect type or ideal of human perfection ; (2) to give him a complete rule of action and an infallible code of morality ; (3) to impress upon his mind the eternal sanction of good and evil, of virtue and vice. And all this has been effected by Jesus Christ. He appeared amongst men as a model of human integrity, unrivalled, unparalleled. He gave us a complete rule of action, embracing all our duties to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves. He proclaimed the great law of equality before God and of charity amongst men. The whole race forms but one family, of which God is the common Father ; the Son of Man Himself is the spouse of our souls ; His Mother is our mother ; His Angels and Saints are our brothers and sisters. In this wonderful code virtue and vice have a sanction worthy of God, an eternal reward or an eternal punishment. Life is but a passage ; the present world is the outpost of another, which will have no end. We are here on earth to prepare ourselves for Heaven, and to purchase an immortal crown. The general judgment will close the scene ; it will be a day of wrath and terror for the wicked —“ *Dies iræ, dies illa* ”—but a day of exultation and triumph for the just. The Eternal Judge will tear away the veil that concealed so many crimes and iniquities. The sinner will absorb the attention of the whole race. An irresistible power will compel him to recount his wickedness. Finally, he will be buried in Hell for all eternity. On the contrary,

the just will enter into the glory of their Lord. An overwhelming splendour will surround them, and "death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away" (Apoc. xxi. 4).

II.—IN THE INTELLECTUAL ORDER.

Truth was unknown to the pagan world. The greatest philosophers were in the dark concerning the most important, the most momentous, the most necessary truths. In fact, a kind of discouragement and despair had seized upon the minds of men. Plato advocated polygamy, infanticide, and drunkenness. Cicero preached perjury, lies, and revenge. Aristotle counselled the destruction of weak and infirm children. Socrates approved the worship of idols. With regard to the existence and nature of the Supreme Being, Plato, the greatest theologian of pagan times, said: "It is difficult to find out the Creator and Father of this universe, and, when found, it is impossible to make Him known to the people" (Timeus). The question of the origin and destiny of man was a problem without solution. What is man? Does he possess a soul, or is he a mere compound of matter, a mere chemical combination? Has he no higher destiny than the beasts of the earth, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea?

"Qu'est ce donc que ce monde, et qu'y venons-nous faire?"

ALFRED DE MUSSET.

Where are we going? What is our end? Is there another life beyond the grave? The greatest

minds were unable to solve these questions. When they treated the subject of the next life, they mentioned Cerberus, the three-headed watch-dog of Hell, and the dark Cocytus, or Acheron, the river of the infernal regions, and they ridiculed those fables and derided the credulity of the crowd. "Do you think that I am so foolish," exclaims Cicero, "as to believe those tales? What man on earth can be so imbecile as to be moved by such things?" (Tusculan, lib. i.).* And he adds: "Either the soul dies with the body or it survives death. . . . In the first case, annihilation is not an evil. In the second, the soul can only live for happiness" (*id.*). Either eternal destruction or eternal happiness! Such is the last word of pagan philosophy. Vice and virtue have the same sanction. There is no difference between them—no difference between the innocent and the guilty, the Saint and the high liver, the murderer and his victim; no difference between Nero and St. Louis, Judas and St. John, Voltaire and St. Vincent de Paul. Annihilation or happiness! There was no human remedy for this despairing fatalism, because the teachers did not know more than the people, or, if they knew a little more, they lacked conviction, zeal, and influence to teach the crowd. Cicero, who said one day that two augurs could not look at one another without smiling, said also that the observances of these augurs should be maintained, because it was neither prudent nor useful to teach the people the knowledge of truth.

It is manifest from all this that human reason is weak and blind; if it has no guide, it will inevitably fall into the pit. Christianity is the infallible guide

of the human mind, and, as it has been rightly said, faith is the *garde-fou*, the parapet of reason. Say what you may, there are certain truths so important, so necessary, so indispensable, that a man who is ignorant of them cannot think nor act as a man. The existence and attributes of a personal God ; His providence, His goodness, His justice, His power, His right of absolute dominion over individuals and nations ; the distinction between good and evil ; the nature and immortality of the soul—these are some of the truths which lie at the foundation of human life, and are the imperishable rock upon which society rests. Christianity has screened and sheltered these saving truths from uncertainty and doubt ; it has snatched them away from the wreck of paganism, purified them, and enabled them to diffuse their light over the face of the earth. Did you ever ask yourself this question : What would be my condition here below if Christ had not come ? Born in the midst of infidelity, I would be tossed about on the sea of unbelief, worshipping the gods of the nations. And the whole world would be plunged into the same darkness. But the Son of Man has enlightened the world, and hence the little child who knows his catechism has far more perfect ideas about God and the soul than the greatest sages of old ever had. Question that child about his origin and his future destiny ; about the creation of the world and the end of all things, and he will return an answer, simple, but lucid and intelligent. He has a solution for all the mighty problems of the present and the next life, and that solution is not a mere opinion grounded upon prob-

able reasons ; it is a certainty so strong, so powerful, so unshaken, so irresistible, that he is quite ready to die for his sacred faith.

The first service, then, which Christianity rendered to reason was to fix and safeguard certain fundamental and all-important truths. The second was to double the native strength of the mind and make its search for knowledge easy. Hence Bacon calls faith the aroma of the sciences—*aroma scientiatum*—a very rich and happy expression. In fact, faith is like a precious balm, which preserves us from the taint of error. It creates everywhere an atmosphere of sweet fragrance, which delights the heart, inspires the mind, and infuses into the whole man a principle of new life and strength. Bacon, Newton, Kepler, Leibnitz, Pascal, and legions of others, were all believers, and their discoveries have enabled us to make giant strides in the regions of knowledge. It is a common thing for free-thinkers to say that faith shackles and enslaves reason, that it clips its wings and hinders its flight. But they know not what they say. They are the slaves, and we are the freed men. Christianity has given us the franchise. If you show a man his way through difficult and unknown paths, if you place in his hand a saving torch to guide him across cliffs and precipices, do you restrict his liberty, do you reduce him to slavery ? And is not this the service which faith renders to reason ? Compare, if you like, Cicero and St. John Chrysostom ; Socrates and St. Basil ; Plato and St. Augustine ; Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas ; Seneca and St. Paul ; Tacitus and Bossuet. Compare all the wisdom of pagan

times and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What an overwhelming contrast ! “ For our satisfaction and instruction,” says Voltaire, “ I would like to see back again on earth the great philosophers of antiquity, the Zoroasters, the Mercuries, the Numas. I would like to see them converse with Pascal—nay, even with any man of ordinary knowledge, in our days. Alas ! I must ask antiquity to excuse me, but I believe they would make a sorry figure. Poor quacks and mountebanks ! they could not get sale for their drugs ” (Nicolas, “ Christianity,” vol. iv.).

Not only does faith guide and protect reason, it magnifies and extends its vision by opening up and disclosing the unexplored and mysterious regions of the supernatural world. It manifests and reveals truths which reason is utterly unable to discover. When the human mind has reached the supreme summit which it is possible for it to attain, then it stops, exhausted, impotent, destitute. And yet it wishes to know more, because it has an immense, an unlimited, craving for truth. Before it lies the infinite, with its wonders, its treasures, its beauties. Will not someone come and remove at least a part of the veil which conceals from us such unwonted magnificence ? It would be so beautiful, so delightful, so worthy of our immortal spirits, to know something about the mysteries of God’s infinite life and His unbounded perfections. How did He make the world ? What is the origin of our race ? Is God our Lord and Master ? Is He also our Father ? Does He care for us ? Does He love us ? Has He spoken to us, and, if so, what has He said ? Can we pray to Him ? Have we any hope of ever seeing

Him ? Are there other beings between us and God, pure spirits, independent of matter ? What is their relation to God ? Can they offend Him ? Can we enter into relation with them ? What is the nature of the reward or punishment which awaits us after death ? Will God forgive us if we offend Him ? How is it that we are inclined to evil, and that we feel a law in our members which fights against the law of our reason ? Will our bodies remain for ever in the grave, or shall we recover them upon some future day ? What will be the end of the world ? Our benighted reason may ask and propose these questions, but it is utterly unable to solve them. Faith comes to the rescue, and introduces us into the wonderland of the secrets and mysteries of the Most High.

III.—IN THE SOCIAL ORDER.

The change wrought by Christianity in the social order is not less wonderful. Before the coming of Christ the State was all, the individual nothing. Monarchs and rulers were considered as semigods or beings of a superior nature ; absolute despots, whose whims and caprices could not be resisted. The *vulgus*, or crowd, had neither rights nor claims. The individual had no initiative ; he was absorbed by the State. And, if he objected to this, he was sure to be sacrificed as the enemy of society. Strange to say, men accepted this state of things ; they loved their degradation and self-annihilation, and considered themselves as things dedicated, consecrated, vowed to their rulers. They were literally like pieces of machinery fixed in their places, without will or

energy of their own, and with no other motion but that which the controlling force imparted to them. Besides, there was no universal brotherhood. In Greece, the stranger was an outcast. In Rome, it was the title of Roman citizen that made the man ; those who did not enjoy this title were barbarians.

The cause of this monstrous disorder was the want of moral development. Man was not conscious of his dignity ; he did not know his excellence nor that of his neighbour, and therefore he allowed himself to be crushed and sacrificed. How different is the case now ! Suppose that a miracle brought back upon earth Augustus, the powerful ruler of Rome in the time of Our Lord. Suppose that you showed him into the English House of Commons or the French Chamber of Deputies, I believe he would think himself in another planet altogether, so great would be his surprise. No doubt he would exclaim in his bewilderment : “ And who are these ? ” “ O Emperor, they are the law-makers, the representatives of the nation.” “ And who sent them here ? ” “ They have been chosen by universal suffrage ; they are the elect of the people.” “ The elect of the people ! Of the slaves, you mean.” “ If you please, O Cæsar, there are no more slaves nowadays ; all men are free.” “ All men are free ! But have you got no Kings ? ” “ Ay, in some places we have ; but Kings do not rule—they are only figure-heads.” “ By Jupiter ! that is new. Kings do not rule ! And these men are sent here by the people to make laws ? ” “ Yea, they are sent even by women. In some countries women have the franchise—they are voters.” “ Never ! That is im-

possible." "It is a fact, O great Augustus." "Ah! then let me return to my grave." Such thoughts must help to bring home to ourselves the wonderful change that has taken place in the social world around us. Man is emancipated; he has a high sense of his dignity, and is conscious of his power. He can now develop all his faculties, and give full scope to his activity and energy. Woman is restored to her rank of wife and mother; she is the companion of man, and is respected as a queen in her own home. There is everywhere a universal gentleness of manners, a great desire of universal brotherhood, a general tendency to ameliorate the condition of the working classes, to shelter the unfortunate, and to protect the weak. There is a social conscience which is the foster-mother of justice and honour, and which does not suffer corruption to remain in high places; a kind of feverish impatience to forestall the future, an incessant movement towards perfection, a general impulse which denotes an extraordinary exuberance of life.

Let us see how Christianity brought about this wonderful revolution. In order to remodel and save society, it was necessary to separate the spiritual from the temporal, and to fix their respective spheres, and this was done by the founder of Christianity when He said: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii. 36). "Render to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and to God what is God's" (Mark xii. 17). By these words the Son of Man put an end to the divinity of the Emperors and to their despotism. He struck a blow at the spiritual power of Kings, and clearly marked the eternal interests

of the soul and the temporal interests of the body. Man realized his excellence, and understood that he must obey God rather than men ; that the temporal is subservient to the eternal, the body to the soul. " I say to you : Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. Fear ye Him who after he hath killed has power to cast into Hell. Yea, I say to you, Fear him " (Luke xii. 4, 5). Hence God must be served first, the King next. A law that violates the Divine right is now no law at all, and should not be obeyed. Individuals must follow their conscience, even when the whole world is arrayed against them. Consider the energy of will and the strength of character exhibited by the martyrs, and you will see the difference between the Christian and the pagan types.

To complete all this, Our Lord proclaimed the law of equality and fraternity amongst men. He raised the poor, the sufferer, and the slave, from their profound abjection, and called them the favourites of God, making them His own representatives here on earth : " As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me " (Matt. xxv. 40). A few years after St. Paul could say in all truth : " There is neither Jew nor Greek ; there is neither bond nor free ; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus " (Gal. iii. 28).

After having thus elevated and ennobled the individual, Christianity protected him against the tyranny and oppression of rulers. The Church did not bend before Kings and Emperors. Popes, Bishops, and Councils trembled not in the presence

of crowned tyrants and robbers. St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, stopped the Emperor Theodosius at the door of the church, and forbade him to enter the sacred temple before he had done public penance for the massacre of the inhabitants of Thessalonica. St. Leo the Great went forth to meet Attila, the Scourge of God, and bade him return to his northern forests. St. Gregory confronted the German tyrant Henry IV., and refused him Holy Communion. It was a Pope who said one day to an ambassador : " Tell your Prince that if I had two souls to save, I might perhaps sacrifice one for his sake ; but, since I have but one, I cannot, and will not, lose it." The people knew this, and whenever the temporal ruler violated the sacred and Divine laws of justice and liberty, they had recourse to the spiritual power as the only authority that could stop tyranny and oppression. The Church established the truce of God, which forbade war from the Friday to the Monday, and anyone violating this law was excommunicated. Shortly after the introduction of Christianity in England three Kings—Monric, Morcant, and Guidnert—were cut off from the Church for the crime of murder, by three councils held in the same year in the town of Llandaff, in Wales (Balmes, " Protestantism and Catholicity," chap. xxxii.).

No one can deny that these ordinances contributed powerfully to the improvement of manners and the uplifting of the race.

IV.—IN THE ÆSTHETIC ORDER.

" Anyone," says Chateaubriand, " who does not believe in the true God excludes the infinite from

his works. The pagans had no higher ideal than their gods and goddesses, who were the personification, the very incarnation, of wickedness. For the most cultured peoples the beautiful was not the splendour of truth—*la splendeur du vrai*—but the reflection of vice. Virtue and morality were banished from art and literature. Painting, sculpture, architecture, and poetry, were dedicated to licentiousness. Obscene plays were the order of the day in the great theatres of Rome and Athens. The actions of the gods were represented in all their loathsome deformity. Their robberies and deeds of violence were the favourite themes of the plays. The effects of these exhibitions on the impressionable hearts of the spectators are vividly described by Juvenal. These representations were witnessed not only by the masses, but also by the Senate and consuls, and even by the augurs and vestal virgins, who had special seats assigned to them. What mimic art represented in the theatre was reproduced in paintings on the walls of temples and private houses” (Gibbons, “Our Christian Heritage,” chap. xxiii.).

The public worship itself did not appeal to the noble instincts of the heart ; it did not raise men to the regions of virtue and holiness, far less did it reveal to him the beauty of God and the dignity of the human soul. It was an unclean, degrading, and ridiculous worship, a real disgrace to our humanity, and the source of crimes that cannot be named.

Christianity has not only stopped the impure torrent of pagan art, it has created masterpieces and *chefs-d'œuvre* that cannot be surpassed. Look at those grand cathedrals which the genius of our

fathers has reared throughout the breadth and the length of Europe. Are they not worthy of the God who inspired them? And does not the mere sight of them ennoble our thoughts and inspire us with lofty sentiments? Their columns and steeples invite us to raise our eyes and our hearts towards Heaven, above the petty scenes of the earth, and to look up for an eternal home. The soul expands under the inspiration of Christianity. Our holy religion opens up before us the regions of the infinite, and furnishes us with ideals all spiritual and Divine. Christian artists can display all the resources of their genius; their field is immense; their subjects are always beautiful, always inspiring, always pathetic, always sublime. Think of the works of art inspired by mythology: the descent of Ulysses into Hell, the Sacking of Troy, the representations of Bacchanals, the portraits of Venus, Penelope, and Helen! Then reflect on some of our Christian masterpieces: the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin and the Child, the Madonnas, the Nativity, the Flight into Egypt, the Crucifixion, the Assumption, the Last Judgment. Not only is there no comparison between the two schools, but they are separated by an infinite distance. Apelles, Zeuxis, and Polygnotus are mere tyros when opposed to Raphael, Murillo, and Poussin.

In sculpture Michael Angelo eclipses all the stars of antiquity. His statue of Moses shows that Christianity has the power of animating marble. Eloquence finds in the Christian religion an inspirer and a mother. The genius of Demosthenes and Cicero was confined to the defence of their clients,

to the love of their country, or to their own interests. The Christian preacher has a higher aim and a larger scope. The eloquence of the Fathers of the Church, of the Basils, the Chrysostoms, the Ambroses, the Augustines, the Gregories, has something Divine, which overawes and subdues. "But what shall we say of Bossuet as an orator? To whom shall we compare him? Looking always upon the grave, and bending, as it were, over the gulf of the future, Bossuet is incessantly dropping the awful words of *time* and *death*, which are re-echoed in the silent abysses of eternity. He gathers around him an indescribable sadness; he becomes merged in sorrows inconceivable" ("Genius of Christianity," book iv., chap. iv.).

In poetry, pagan antiquity had peopled Nature with fauns, sylvan gods, satyrs, naiads, nymphs, and tritons. Christianity expelled these shadows, and exorcised Nature; and poetry, thus purified and restored to its dignity, sang in inimitable accents the glory of God and the beauty of virtue. The "Jerusalem Delivered" of Tasso, the "Inferno" of Dante, the "Esther," "Athalie," and "Polyeucte," of Racine, are purely Christian creations, which have never been equalled in richness, grandeur, and sublimity.

Christianity has also ennobled harmony and music. It has invented the organ, and given sighs even to brass itself. "Song is the daughter of prayer, and prayer is the companion of religion" (Chateaubriand). Palestrina, Haydn, Mozart, Le Sueur, Gounod, and hundreds of others, are indebted to their Christian faith for their masterpieces. The

chant of the Passion, the Lamentations of Jeremias, the *Te Deum*, the *Dies iræ*, and the whole Office of the Dead, have a character of sublimity which is truly Divine.

No one can deny the necessity of exterior worship. Man is not an Angel ; he is a compound of body and soul, and he must express exteriorly his interior thoughts and feelings. Those who reject the exterior manifestation of faith lose sight of man's nature, and of the paramount influence of ceremonies over the people. The magnificent ceremonial of the Church has contributed powerfully to bring man nearer to God. The sacred liturgy is the poetry of the faithful. Every mystery of religion, every fact in the life of the Saviour, every Christian virtue, is placed before the people in due time in the course of the ecclesiastical year. From Christmas to Christmas the life of the Saviour is reproduced, with its joys, its sorrows, and its triumphs. And so the light of the world is always shining ; it is never put out. The Son of Man is mixed up with our humanity ; He enters into the destinies of the race ; He is the soul of mankind. There is a perpetual round of festivals, masses, and benedictions, which come in turn, always fresh and beautiful, and incessantly remind the faithful of the love and mercy of God, the sublime virtues of the Virgins, the Martyrs, the Confessors, and all the heroes of Christianity. The commemoration of the dead brings home to our hearts the sweet remembrance of our departed friends, and tells us that the chain of love which united us during life is not broken by death. How strange that the first thought which religion

conveys to our minds, beside the mortal remains of our dear ones, is a thought of hope ! Is it not beautiful to hear the voice of hope and love coming out of the regions of death, and proclaiming the words of Christ : " I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live " (John xi. 25).

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN TYPE

I.—THE NEW HUMANITY.

VOLTAIRE says that "no philosopher ever did so much as influence the morals of the street wherein he lived." Christ has influenced the morals of the whole universe, He has created the Christian type. Accustomed as we are to the splendours of creation, to the brightness and magnificence of the sun, to the infinite expanse of the firmament, we pass through this world, we live and die, without giving a thought to those grand spectacles of Nature—nay, even without suspecting the sublimity of their grandeur. We treat in the same indifferent way the wonderful and truly Divine morality of the Gospel, because it has become familiar—I should say natural—to us. In it we live, we move, and we are ; we breathe its spirit, we are saturated with it. It fills the very atmosphere which surrounds us ; we find it in our civil code, our social institutions, our civilizations, our customs and traditions. And because we walk in its light we remain indifferent to its blessings. A French writer, speaking of the famous " Republic " of Plato, says : " This legislation, which appeared at the time as the ideal of a

perfection that was impracticable, is only impracticable in our days because it is immoral" (Aimé Martin, "De l'Éducation des Mères de Famille"). In order to realize and properly estimate the abyss which separates the new and the old humanity, we should never lose sight of the profound darkness which preceded the coming of Christ; we should remember the time when the most shameful superstitions covered the earth with their abominable practices; when the dreadful torrent of human iniquities swept over the face of the globe; when humility, charity, hope, justice, modesty, self-abnegation, had not even a name in the language of men; when slavery was the common law; when monsters like Nero and Diocletian were worshipped as gods; when all human passions had their temples and their altars; in fine, when man, degraded, oppressed, and crushed, resigned himself to his lot, and accepted his condition as an evil without a remedy. At the sight of these appalling disorders we can more readily understand the meaning of Christian honesty; we can appreciate all the gifts of God, and measure at a glance the advance of the race under the guidance of Christ. Look at the man whose conduct is in keeping with his faith. See how he binds up eternity with his life. He knows that he is responsible to God for all his thoughts, words, and deeds; he knows that all his actions, all his feelings, all his fancies, go forth before him into eternity to be registered by God's Angels for or against him. The Decalogue of Sinai is his code of morality and the rule of his conduct: "Thou shalt not have strange gods. Thou shalt not take

the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day. Honour thy father and thy mother. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods." Thus is the life of the Christian summed up in the love of God and the love of his neighbour. The true Christian loves God with his whole heart, his whole soul, his whole strength ; and he loves his neighbour as himself. Read the page of St. Paul on the virtue of charity, and you will see the great moral revolution effected by the Gospel at the very outset of Christianity : " If I speak with the tongues of men and of Angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. . . . Charity is patient, is kind : charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely ; is not puffed up ; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things " (1 Cor. xiii. 1-7). This picture, which was unknown in pagan times, is now faithfully reproduced by the true disciples of Jesus Christ. The life of a good Christian is a living commentary on the Gospel. He beholds the things of this world divested of their deceitful mirage, and sees them only in the light of eternity. He considers the present life as a pilgrimage through a strange country, an exile in a foreign land. He is not shocked at the sight of the persecutions and trials of the just, nor is he surprised to see the triumph and exultation of the wicked, because he knows that all seeming disorders will be adjusted in

the end. He is not elated in prosperity, nor is he dejected in adversity. If at times his cross is heavy and his chalice bitter, he raises his tearful eyes to his Heavenly Father, and says : " Thy will be done ! " He makes use of every instant of life to increase the brightness of his crown, because he knows that God placed him in this world to make a fortune for Heaven. What shall we say of his magnanimity, his strength of character, his elevation of views, his broadness of mind, his perfect honesty ? His life is a perpetual lesson of virtue, and his death one of the most touching and eloquent spectacles which this fallen world can offer for the admiration of the Angels. He has finished his course ; life is over. How short it was ! And now the good and faithful servant goes to receive his reward. Day by day he has carefully examined his conscience and settled all his accounts with the justice of God. He has lived under the eye of his Master, and worked for Him, and with Him. At length the last hour has come, and it is full of sweetness and full of hope. " Come and see the faithful Christian expire ; he has ceased to be a creature of this world, he no longer belongs to his native country : all connection between him and society is at an end. For him the calculations of time have closed ; he has already begun to date from the great era of eternity. A priest seated at his pillow administers consolation. This minister of God cheers the dying man with the bright prospect of immortality. The decisive moment has now arrived. A sacrament opened to this just man the gates of the world ; a sacrament is about to close

them. Religion rocked him in the cradle of life, and now her sweet song and maternal hand will lull him to sleep in the cradle of death. His soul, nearly set free from the body, is almost visible in his countenance. Already he hears the concerts of the Seraphim ; already he prepares to speed his flight to those regions where Hope, the daughter of Virtue and of Death, invites him " (" Genius of Christianity," book i., chap. xi.). A few moments before breathing his last, the great Suarez was heard to say : " I could never imagine that it was so sweet to die !" In the exercise of my ministry I have witnessed some beautiful deaths which no words of mine could possibly describe. I have seen gentle and frail creatures cut off in the full bloom of youth and in the flower of their age ; I have seen them smiling sweetly at the thought of death, bidding adieu to all the enjoyments of life without regret and without tears, consoling their relations and friends, speaking of Heaven as an exile speaks of his home, and impatient to be dissolved and to be with Christ. What a strange and glorious sight ! Death is so terrible and so formidable to those who believe not ! What does the infidel think of a religion which changes death into a nuptial feast and turns it into rapture and delight ?

II.—THE SAINT.

To be a true and sincere Christian does not mean to be a Saint. A Saint is a prodigy of virility, perfection, and holiness ; a living miracle which all human efforts, all human sects, all false religions, all philosophies, will never create. The Saints carry

beyond the common bounds and limits the practice of all Christian virtues ; they carry to a sublime excess the fulfilment of the Gospel precepts and counsels. We see around us many good, upright, and virtuous men and women, but what shall we say of the Saints ? The Saints are the flower of the race and of the Church ; they are the true friends and children of God. There is between them and the three Divine Persons an incessant communication of love, a stupendous, an astounding familiarity. God lavishes on them more graces than upon whole provinces, because they are dearer to Him than legions of vulgar souls. They are the only great men and women in the world ; their ambition is not confined to the present life ; they work for eternity. The whole universe is too small for their aspirations ; the Infinite alone can satisfy them. Sanctity is made up of two notes : love and fortitude. The love of the Saints for God breaks forth into acts of the most sublime heroism. It is stronger even than death, and it communicates to all the energies and powers of their souls a force, a virility, which no contrary influence can destroy. We read in history that three hundred Spartan soldiers awaited in the narrow pass of Thermopylæ the innumerable multitude of their enemies. They all knew they were going to inevitable death. One of them wrote with the point of his sword on the face of the rock the famous inscription : “ Ye that pass by, go and tell Sparta that we died for her sake.” We are struck with admiration and wonder at the sight of this heroic spectacle, because we see the love of country carried to a sublime extravagance. Forti-

tude is the virtue of heroes, and in God's sight all the Saints are heroes. It is far more difficult to crush our passions, subdue our evil inclinations, and practise the virtues in a heroic degree than to conquer kingdoms and nations. In the Saints charity is so perfect as not only to forgive an offence, but to love and embrace an enemy ; purity so great as to be afraid of a look ; meekness so complete as to repress and crush the least impulse of nature ; humility so profound as to crave contempt. How far we are from the heathen, and even from the Jewish type ! Christ has spiritualized the race. He has raised man above the petty passions and the noise of this world, and exalted him to the regions of holiness. He has not changed human nature, but only strengthened it by His grace. Now, as of yore, man is inclined to evil ; he has the same passions, the same leaning towards depravity and wickedness, and yet he says what he never said before : " O my God, I love Thee with my whole heart and soul and above all things !" and instead of wallowing in the mire of his passions, he walks on them, even as St. Peter walked on the troubled sea. This is what infidels do not and cannot understand. The perfection of the Saints provokes, indeed, their admiration, but it also puzzles their wits and remains a mystery without a solution. The impious Voltaire has written an exquisitely beautiful page on St. Louis, King of France. He says : " St. Louis is humble in the midst of splendour ; he is a King and yet he is modest and gentle. He helps the poor and the needy, and becomes their servant ; he is the first King who served them.

Pagan morality would never have imagined such a thing. Charity was unknown to the heathens. . . . O phantoms of virtue, how far you are from true heroism ! To behold with the same indifference a crown and the chains of a prison ; health and sickness ; life and death ; to perform admirable deeds and fear the looks and the admiration of men ; to love only God and duty ; to share the misfortune of others ; to consider trials and sufferings as a means of sanctification ; to remain always in the presence of God ; to undertake nothing but for God, and to suffer for His sake alone—such was St. Louis, the Christian hero. Always great and yet always simple, always forgetful of self and mindful of others, he fought for the good of his people and for his God. Victor, he pardoned ; vanquished, he bore his captivity without braving it. His life was spent in innocence ; he lived in hair-cloth ; he died on ashes ” (Voltaire, Edition Beuchot, tome 39, p. 127). God can make a Saint out of the most shapeless and deformed material : a child, a soldier, a philosopher, a shepherd, a slave, a King, a heart that has remained pure, a criminal and guilty soul—all is fit material for the highest sanctity. In the formation of His elect God loves to work on nothing. He never appears greater than when He goes below nothing to seek a degraded soul and change it into a pearl fit for Heaven. A Saint-slayer and persecutor like St. Paul becomes a fearless Apostle ; a public sinner like the Magdalene is a fit subject for the highest contemplation ; a pure and tender maiden of thirteen, like Agnes, becomes a prodigy of fortitude and inflexible firmness ; a sinner like

Augustine is changed into a Doctor of the Church ; a man of a choleric disposition like Vincent de Paul becomes a model of meekness and gentleness. All is good for God to make a Saint of. He calls the young man of the world in the midst of his dreams and gives him the cell of a lay-brother in the solitude of a monastery. He whispers into the ear of some elegant maiden in the midst of merriment and gaiety, and transforms her into a Sister of the Poor. There is no land so arid, no clime so burning, no age so barbarous, that has not produced some of those beautiful flowers of sanctity which grow in such abundance in the garden of the Church. Moreover, each Saint has his own character. As star differeth from star, so do the Saints differ from one another. The grace of God, although one in nature, assumes an almost infinite variety of forms and shades. Some sanctify themselves in solitude, others in the midst of the world, some in poverty and suffering, others on a throne. St. Edward, the Anglo-Saxon King, led the life of an Angel in the midst of a brilliant court ; St. Genevieve, the patroness of Paris, was a shepherdess ; St. Mauritius, a soldier ; St. Benedict Labre, a mendicant ; St. Perpetua, a lady of rank ; St. Blandina, a slave. I wonder what would be the thoughts, the feelings, the reflections of Socrates, the great Moralist of antiquity, if he came back on earth and read the life of St. Vincent de Paul ? I believe the shock would be so great that he would never get over it. And what do our infidels think of the same wonderful life ? What natural explanation can they give for such abnegation and heroism ? St. Vincent de Paul did more

for the relief of suffering humanity than all the Kings and Emperors of the world. Although destitute of fortune or any other worldly advantage, he founded innumerable hospitals, or houses of charity, for foundlings and orphans, for the aged, and for galley-slaves. During the wars of Lorraine he collected alms and saved the lives of thousands of human beings. At the approach of winter he used to shed tears and exclaim : " Alas ! this is indeed a very severe season ! What will become of the poor ? " When told that his charity had exhausted all the resources of his house, he said : " So much the better. The time has now come when we shall see whether we have confidence in God." He had a frankness of manner, a serenity of expression which recalled the meekness of Jesus Christ. By dint of patience and strength of character, he became the most humble and the most gentle of men. He looked upon the esteem in which he was held as an insult to his misery, calling himself the rudest and the most ridiculous of men, and considering himself unworthy of the very necessities of life (" Vie de S. Vincent de Paul," par Hamon, c. 7). I repeat, we are far away from the pagan or the Jewish type.

III.—THE MARTYR.

Our Lord, forecasting the persecutions that were to assail His Church, said to His disciples : " They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall put you to death, and you shall be hated by all nations for My Name's sake " (Matt. xxiv. 9). " Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep,

but the world shall rejoice ; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. . . . Have confidence, I have overcome the world " (John xvi. 20, 33). These strange and terrible words have created another Christian type—the martyr. The Church counts her martyrs by millions. They are of every age, sex, and condition, and they belong to every nation under Heaven. We see in their ranks masters and slaves, soldiers and labourers, children and youths, old men and venerable matrons. Their testimony is overwhelming and absolutely conclusive. They lost their lives in the midst of tortures that cannot be described. They were subjected to all the refinements of the wildest savagery which human barbarity could devise. The mere mention of the instruments of torture used in these horrible massacres makes us shudder with horror—iron hooks, racks, wheels, combs and pincers to tear the flesh, mallets, grid-irons, furnaces furnished with iron chairs, cauldrons, and boilers, ladles for pouring melted lead, iron collars and manacles with sharp points, whips and scourges, knives, saws and axes. When these terrible weapons had done their work, if life was not yet extinct, the martyrs were thrown into the amphitheatre to be devoured by wild beasts. In the midst of these horrors they remained undisturbed ; there was no excitement, no wild agitation, no fanaticism, no lamentation, no appeal to compassion and mercy, but a peaceful serenity, an unalterable patience, a gentle behaviour, an unbounded happiness. In the very teeth of death they prayed for their executioners, repeating the words of their

Master : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do " (Luke xxiii. 34). The mere sight of such sublime tranquillity and peace wrought wonders in the ranks of their tormentors, and brought about innumerable conversions. We are here in the presence of a fact which is universal and absolutely supernatural—a fact which all the infidels in the world will never contrive to explain. This extraordinary miracle of intrepidity, resignation, and fortitude, repeated millions of times in the course of twenty centuries, is evidently beyond the forces of human nature, and must necessarily be attributed to the power of God. I have never read anything that did me so much good, or evoked such deep and noble feelings in my heart, as the martyrdom of St. Agnes. This child-martyr was only thirteen years of age when she suffered for Christ. She belonged to a rich and illustrious family of Rome, and was brought up in all the refinements of the age. Heiress of an immense fortune, and endowed with all the gifts of nature and grace, she grew up like a fair and spotless lily, with two loves in her heart—the love of Jesus and the love of holy purity. Her innocence had all the freshness, the candour, and simplicity of childhood. Brought before the Prefect of Rome, she was told that she must either renounce Christ or die. Without betraying the least emotion, she raised her innocent eyes to Heaven and said that she was ready to die for her Heavenly Spouse. " He is noble," she said, " He is rich and beautiful. I am engaged to Him. I love Him, and His love makes me pure." In order to shake her constancy, the Prefect ex-

hibited to her the prospect of a brilliant marriage, but she repeated that she was the bride of Jesus. Enraged and confused, the tyrant had recourse to threats ; all sorts of instruments of torture were displayed to her sight. She looked at them with a smile, and remained calm and serene. Deprived of all human support, thrown into a dark prison, threatened with the most terrible death, this little maid braves the power of Rome. The whole world rages against her. Her will, the will of that frail creature, remains unshaken, immovable, like the rock against which the mighty sea dashes its fury. No power can break it. Amid the fearful clamours of the crowd, or the still more fearful stillness of the tribunals, she keeps her soul in peace ; she retires into the enclosed garden of her conscience, as tranquil and undisturbed as if she reposed in the arms of her mother. If all the armies of the mighty Cæsars, if the whole universe were arrayed against that child, they could never shake her invincible resolve. Finally, she was led to the place of execution. Her head was cut off, like a beautiful flower plucked from its stem. In a moment her white robe was crimsoned with blood, and she fled to her Heavenly Spouse. How despicable are all the heroes and heroines of pagan antiquity compared with this little child ! And Agnes is but one out of millions ! During nearly three centuries ten general persecutions took place, besides innumerable local outbursts of popular fury. And yet, strange to say, all these butcheries, far from destroying the Church, increased its vitality, and prodigiously multiplied the number of believers. Hence the well-known

words of Tertullian : " The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians."

IV.—THE RELIGIOUS.

The Religious is another type of the new humanity. When Our Lord founded His sublime religion, He wished that all Christians should fulfil the commandments, but He wished also that some chosen souls, the flower and bloom of His Church, should practise the evangelical counsels : " If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow Me " (Matt. xix. 21). " Every one that left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting " (Matt. xix. 29). By these words the Son of God created the religious life. There have always been, and there always will be, Religious Orders in the Church. As long as Christianity remains standing, it will never cease to yield those flowers and fruits which are the mark of its vigour and strength. Hence, wherever our holy religion establishes itself, there we see the religious life springing up and growing luxuriantly. We see also the most beautiful and generous souls turning aside from human things, and consecrating their virginal energies to the service of God. Times, persecutions, and revolutions may scatter them, and close their peaceful retreats, but they reform their battalions in distant lands, and resume their Divine mission, praying, toiling, and dying for their fellow-men. How well they understand the words of the master : " When they shall persecute you in this city

flee into another " (Matt. x. 25). " What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul ? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul ? " (Matt. xvi. 28). How well they realize the pettiness, the misery, and worthlessness of this world ! If the Empire of the whole universe was offered to them, they would refuse it, as unworthy of their immortal souls. Everything earthly is transitory and fugitive, and therefore unable to satisfy their cravings. They know that they cannot serve two masters, and as the world, with its shoals and dangers, its temptations and scandals, is under the power of the Prince of Darkness, they turn away from it and retire into solitude. There they surrender themselves unreservedly to the God of Virtues, by the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and sacrifice to Him their passions, their possessions, and their wills. They become like precious vessels consecrated and reserved for the service of the altar. There is something truly grand and sublime in this supreme effort of human weakness, this last resource of human inconstancy, to release itself once and for ever from the trammels of this world, and to fix itself irrevocably in good. The religious life is beautiful, because of its detachment from the world. The Christian soul is like an exile panting after home. The remembrance of Calvary fills it with sadness, and whatever inclines it to melancholy has for it inexpressible charms. We delight in the contemplation of ruins, because these decayed monuments have a great resemblance to our shattered being, and, like the Jews captive in Babylon, we are pensive and sorrowful because we remember Sion.

The religious life is not useless to the world ; it renders invaluable services to humanity. By their good works, their example, their learning, their prayers, the monks of the past and the religious of to-day have contributed powerfully to the advance and betterment of our race. History tells us, in the light of the most absolute evidence, that the services rendered by them to Society cannot be properly estimated. They have converted pagan nations, opened vast and impassable forests, erected monuments that excite the admiration of all ages, built cities, raised hospitals and retreats for the aged, the sick, and the poor. In our days they are the vanguard and the glory of the Church, the legion of honour, always ready for great sacrifices and supreme heroisms. They spend their lives with the outcasts of Society and the little ones of Jesus ; they follow savages to their forest homes, and go to the very ends of the world in search of souls redeemed at so great a price. Look at those thousands of virgins and holy maidens who come forth from the world every year in order to consecrate their youth, their heart, their beauty, their life, to their immortal Spouse. What would become of the world if they were not there to soothe and console, to heal and refresh, to rescue and save ? “ In the Church this race was brought up,” says St. Augustine. “ Of this number no one need say with St. Paul : ‘ I, who was first a blasphemer, a persecutor, an evil-doer ’ ” (“ De Virgin.,” xxxv., xxxvii.). It is the love, I should say the passion, of the Angelic virtue, which is the cause of their great works.

The example of the Religious Orders exercises a

profound influence on the morals of the world, and promotes everywhere holiness of life and purity of character. "Who can calculate the holy thoughts, the chaste inspirations which have gone forth from those silent abodes of modesty? Do you not believe that the maiden whose heart begins to be agitated by temptation, that the matron who has allowed dangerous feelings to enter her soul, have not often found their passions restrained by the remembrance of a sister, a relative, or a friend, who, in one of these silent abodes, is perpetually raising her pure heart to Heaven, offering as a holocaust to the Divine Son of the Blessed Virgin all the enchantments of youth and beauty" (Balmes, "Protestantism and Catholicism," chap. xxvi.). Worldlings imagine but too often that the practice of the commandments is impossible, but when they see legions of religious of every age and sex join the practice of the evangelical counsels to that of the precepts, then all their cowardice vanishes away, and they fight with more courage against the wickedness of the world and of the flesh.

During the first ages of the Church, when the new humanity was emerging from the chaos and corruption of heathenism, the Solitaries came to infuse a new spirit into the hearts of those generations. They came to spiritualize the race, to raise the mind above grovelling passions, and to offer to the human soul something more than the enjoyments of this earth. "The life of the Solitaries was well adapted to produce this effect. In reading the history of these times, we seem to find ourselves transported out of this world; the flesh has disappeared, and

there remains nothing but the spirit. . . . All the ties of the earth have been broken ; man puts himself in intimate communication with Heaven. Miracles multiply exceedingly in these lives ; apparitions continually come into sight ; good Angels struggle against the demons, Heaven against Hell, God against Satan ; the earth is there to serve only as a field of battle ; the body exists no longer except to be consumed as a holocaust on the altars of virtue " (Balmes, " Protestantism and Catholicism," chap. xxxix.). Strong reactions and extraordinary virtues are necessary to counteract great evils, and the history of the Church reveals to us the wonderful fact that the religious institutions are raised up by God, when they are wanted, as a powerful antidote against the sores of Society, a breakwater against the corruption of the world. The Benedictines, the Cistercians, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Jesuits, came in turn, at the right time, to fight the battles of the Lord, and to oppose the torrent of iniquity that swept over the earth.

Montalembert, speaking of the services rendered to knowledge by the monks of the West, says : " We can never adequately tell how marvellously their life was adapted for study, for the ardent, active, and assiduous cultivation of letters. We can never sufficiently celebrate their touching modesty, their indefatigable researches, their penetration almost supernatural " (" Monks of the West," Introduction).

But it is especially by their mortifications and prayers that the Religious are useful to Society. They expiate the sins of the world, and stop the

vengeance of the Almighty. They stand like mediators between the justice of God and the wickedness of men. If there had been a small community of Religious in the wretched Sodom, God would have spared the guilty city for their sake. "Where goest thou?" said the Emperor Valens one day to a noble Persian who had become a monk. "I go to pray for your Empire," answered the monk. When the fleet of Philip Augustus, sailing towards the Holy Land, was assailed by a terrible storm, the King sustained the courage of his sailors by telling them that the monks of Clairvaux were at that very hour offering prayers and supplications for their preservation and safety ("Monks of the West," Introduction).

CHAPTER IV

THE MASTERPIECE OF CHRIST

THE MASTERPIECE OF CHRIST IS HIS CHURCH.

“CHRIST loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it. . . . That he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish ” (Eph. v. 25, 27).

I.—UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

When the Israelites were passing through the desert, on their way to the Promised Land, they encamped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan. Balac, the King of the land, frightened at the sight of this immense multitude, sent for Balaam, his prophet, and commanded him to go and curse the race of Jacob. Balaam therefore arose, and ascended a mountain that looked towards the wilderness, and, lifting up his eyes, he saw the Israelites abiding in their tents, by their tribes and families, and in the centre the ark of the living God. Transported with enthusiasm at the sight of this grand spectacle, he exclaimed in his admiration : “ How beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Jacob, and thy tents, O Israel ! ” (Num. xxiv. 5). I can never read

these words without thinking of the Catholic Church, the glorious Church of Christ. A pilgrim on earth, with her home in Heaven, she conducts the innumerable multitude of her children through the desert of this world to the eternal city of God. And what provokes the admiration and enthusiasm of all those who behold her, even of the false prophets who are sent to curse and revile her, is the prodigy of her wonderful unity. The Catholic Church extends to all nations and peoples ; she counts her children by hundreds of millions, and they all profess the same faith, partake of the same sacraments, and assist at the same sacrifice. This fact is unique, unheard of ; it is a miracle of the first order which alone suffices to prove the Divinity of Jesus Christ. What a contrast is this to the sad and sorrowful spectacle presented to us by those innumerable sects that have come into existence from the time of the Reformation ! They all pretend to speak in the name of God, they all take the Bible for their rule of Faith, and yet they are all opposed to each other. What is affirmed by the one is at once contradicted and anathematized by the other. The most momentous and fundamental dogmas of the Christian creed are believed or disbelieved, according to times and circumstances, or rather according to the whims and caprices of the Protestant teachers. Was this religious anarchy intended by Christ ? Can we say that this monstrous pandemonium is the work of Christ ? If there is a certain fact it is that Christ insisted on unity as the characteristic mark of His Church. The very night before His death, when He delivered His last

instructions to His disciples, and made His last will, He raised His eyes towards Heaven, and prayed for unity : " Holy Father," He said, " keep them in Thy Name whom Thou hast given Me ; that they may be one, as we also are . . . that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me " (John xvii. 11, 21). To impress more deeply the seal of unity upon His Church, He selected Peter as the head and ruler of the Christian Commonwealth, the governor of His household ; He committed to him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and established him the unyielding and immovable foundation of that society which was to continue His work till the end of time. He compared the Church to a vine, the branches of which are united in the same stem, and nourished with the same sap. He compared it to a sheepfold, a new and rich illustration of unity. The sheep and lambs are all at peace on the plain ; they obey the same shepherd, and the selfsame pastures supply their wants.

It is a fact, then—an incontrovertible fact—that the Founder of Christianity sealed His Church with the indelible mark of unity—unity of faith, unity of worship, unity of government. St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, insists on this, because it is a question of life and death ; he says that the authors of sects shall not possess the Kingdom of Heaven (Gal. v. 20, 21), and he exclaims : " Be careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one spirit. . . . One Lord, one faith, one baptism " (Eph. iv. 3 *et seq.*).

It must be manifest to all Christians that the constitution of the Church is a work of infinite

wisdom, the work of God Himself. And how could we recognize the infinite wisdom of God in a Church devoid of unity, in a Church composed of innumerable sects all opposed to each other? Such a monstrous creation could only be the work of the Devil; it could not be the work of God. Look at those who wish to form an association for any political, scientific, or commercial purpose. Is not their first care for unity? Do they not realize that without unity all their efforts are vain? And is the Son of God less wise than the children of men? He is the "Light of the World." Did His light shine only to plunge men into religious confusion and anarchy? He is the architect of the universe. He established the sublime union which regulates the celestial spheres. Was He, then, unable to found a Church that would reflect the peaceful harmony of Nature? Who will deny that union is the necessary condition of existence here below? There is no society, no association, however barbarous, that does not understand this. The devils themselves are united in their infernal work, for "if Satan be divided between himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" (Luke xi. 18). What can we expect of soldiers who do not keep the ranks, but fight against one another? At the mere approach of the enemy their battalions will be broken, and a crushing defeat will ensue. A religious society without unity is doomed to destruction. That society cannot command the respect and obedience of mankind. Men will never be satisfied with uncertainty and doubt. They want light, but where will they find it? In the midst of religious darkness? They want

authority. They will say: "If Christians do not agree between themselves, how can they have a claim upon us? According to their Gospel, 'he that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned;' and when we ask them what we are to believe, we hear a thousand contradictory answers." These are arguments to which there is no reply. I venture to say that if Protestantism had not broken the unity of the Church, the whole world would now be entirely Christian. At the time of the Reformation there was an exuberance of life in Europe. The Christian nations, replete with overflowing energy, and united in the same Faith, were about to reap the fruit of centuries. Their fleets ploughed the seas, their explorers discovered new worlds, a great spirit of enterprise was displayed everywhere, and missionaries penetrated into every land. But Protestantism scattered all these magnificent hopes by introducing discord among sister nations, and forthwith all the energy, all the resources, of Christian Europe, were swallowed up and wasted in fratricidal struggles.

This question of unity is one of supreme importance, and for that reason we insist on it. It is certain that Christ stamped His Church with the mark of unity—certain that without unity there is no true Christianity—certain that the Catholic Church alone has the note of unity. Therefore the Catholic Church alone is the true Church of Christ. Hence the folly of the modern theory of Indifferentism in matters of religion. According to this theory a man can freely choose his religion because all religions are good, and God does not care what

creed His creatures profess, provided they serve Him, according to their own fashion. This doctrine is absolutely untenable. Any reader of the Gospel must face the following dilemma: Either Christ deceived us, or there is but one Faith, one Church, one true religion. As we are bound to serve God, we are equally bound to do so in the particular way which He commands, because He is the master, and He measures our rights. To imagine, therefore, that we are free to determine in what way He is to be served is the height of impudence and folly. No, a thousand times no; God cannot be dependent on the whims of His creatures; He cannot look, with equal concern, on truth and error, nor can He be equally satisfied with good and evil.

II.—UNIVERSALITY IN TIME AND SPACE.

The true Church of Christ must extend to all times and places. The following evidences will soon convince us of this great truth.

I. *Universality in Time.*

We are all familiar with the words of Isaias, the greatest of all prophets: "A child is born unto us, and a son is given to us. . . . He shall sit upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom; to establish it . . . from henceforth and for ever" (Isa. ix. 6, 7). In the famous dream of Nabuchodonosor interpreted by Daniel, the great statue made of gold, silver, iron, and clay, represented the four kingdoms of the Medes, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. Out of the ruins of these nations a new kingdom

will arise, the kingdom of Christ, and it will last for ever. "In the days of those kingdoms," says the holy prophet, "the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed" (Dan. ii. 44). How well we are reminded of the words of the Archangel on the day of the Annunciation: "Of His kingdom there shall be no end!" (Luke i. 33). Not less clear and forcible are the words of Our Lord Himself: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). In these words we recognize the Lord of eternity and the Ruler of all ages. Even the best and the greatest of men never dream of a universal domination. They work for their age, and their deeds are always marked with the character of weakness that is inseparable from human things. Christ, on the contrary, works for all times, because all times belong to Him. His very words are marked with the stamp of eternity. We can see that despite the opposition of men, and the efforts of Hell, He means to have His own way. The Church founded by Him must, and will, last for ever. It follows from this, (1) that the true Church of Christ cannot be reformed in its Faith or in its constitution, and (2) that it is indestructible.

1. *The Church cannot be reformed.*—If the Son of Man has pledged His immortal word that He would never leave His Church—not even one day—and that the gates of Hell would never prevail against it, then that Church cannot possibly fall into error, and, consequently, it cannot be reformed. Till the end of time it must preserve its purity, its individuality, its integrity. Till the end of time it must remain

such as it came out from His sacred hands, pure and undefiled, without spot or wrinkle, His very spouse, His only one, His beautiful one, the Church of the one shepherd, the Church built on the rock.

2. *The Church is indestructible.*—If you wish to discuss the future of some human institution, you can never pronounce with certainty. You may prognosticate with more or less probability. You may say: "I hope that such and such a thing will come to pass." But you cannot be sure. On the contrary, the Catholic man who speaks of the future of His Church is certain of what he says. Whether he be rich or poor, learned or ignorant, it is all the same; he does not hesitate, he has no doubt. His Church cannot perish, because the words of Christ must be fulfilled. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the words of Christ will not pass away.

During the very first Christian generation the Apostolic succession began, and since then it has never been broken. The Apostles ordained and commissioned their successors (Acts xiv. 22). All self-appointed preachers, like Simon the Magician, and others, were inexorably cut off, rejected, excommunicated. "Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God" (Heb. v. 4). The preachers of the Gospel must receive a special delegation, and "be sent" by lawful authority (Rom. x. 15), and they must preach the pure doctrine of Christ: "Though we or an Angel from Heaven preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. i. 8). After the death of the Apostles, the same inflexible rule, the same strict order of

discipline, prevailed. "Who art thou?" says Tertullian to Marcion, a reformer of the second century. "Who sent thee? Prove thy mission. Show thy titles, thou robber of authority." Then he challenges all heretics to trace back their origin to the Apostles. "Let them produce the origin of their Churches, let them unfold the succession of their Bishops, so that the first of them may appear to have been ordained by an Apostle, or an Apostolic man, who was in communion with the Apostles" ("Lib. de Præscript.," cap. xxxii.). In fact, what would you think of a man who, without any commission, would assume office in the magistracy, the Parliament, the army? Would you not treat him as a criminal, a robber of authority?

From all this it follows that there must be at the present time in the world a Church whose existence has never been interrupted during nineteen centuries—a Church whose constitution has not been altered, and whose faith has remained unchanged; a Church that has survived all storms, all persecutions and revolutions; a Church that must still be fresh and young, ready for the battles of the future. Where shall we find this immortal Church? Look round about and see. The Catholic Church alone has immortality written on its brow. "There is not, and there never was, on this earth," says a Protestant historian, "a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church. The history of that Church joins together the two great ages of human civilization. No other institution is left standing which carries the mind back to the times when the smoke of

sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when camelpards and tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre" (Macaulay, *Edinburgh Review*). What a contrast is this to the fleeting existence of the sects that surround us! These sects assume all shapes and forms, according to times and circumstances. They rise and die like the waves of a stormy sea. Their very names betray their human origin, and we can see at a glance that they are of recent date. Their authors are Luther and Henry VIII. : Luther, a revolted monk and a traitor to his vows; Henry VIII., an adulterous monarch, a wife-killer, a monster of cruelty! Who can believe that these men were sent by God to reform His Church? Who can believe that Christ addressed them the sublime words: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you" (John xx. 21)? "Give me miracles," cries out Erasmus. "The Apostles would not have been believed, had they not proved the truth of their doctrines by miracles. . . . Among you is there one who has been able to cure a lame horse?"

2. *Universality in Space.*

Just as the Catholic Church is the mistress of centuries, it is also the mistress of nations. The Son of Man did not come to save only one people: He came to save the whole race, and therefore His Church must extend to the whole world. In the Old Testament Jehovah declares that His Christ shall receive the Gentiles for His inheritance and the utmost ends of the earth for His possession (Ps. ii. 8). He declares that in Him all the tribes

of the earth shall be blessed (Ps. lxxi. 17). Isaias, forecasting these wonders, addresses the new Church in the magnificent words : " Thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee " (Isa. lx. 4, 5). Christ came to fulfil these grand prophecies. He solemnly proclaimed that His Gospel would be preached to the whole world : " Going, therefore, teach ye all nations " (Matt. xxviii. 19). " You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth " (Acts i. 8). It follows from this that the true Church of Christ must of necessity be Catholic, or universal. Whilst remaining one in faith, it must pervade all nations and preserve a perfect unity in the immensity of its extension. Protestants may, indeed, be everywhere, but they are everywhere different. Catholicity is made up of two inseparable elements—unity and number. To maintain that a number of sects, at war with each other, form one universal Church is much the same as to say that all the governments of the world form but one government ; that France and Germany are but one people, England and Russia one nation. Choose any one of the Protestant sects—even the most influential and the most numerous—and compare it with the Catholic Church. In that one Protestant sect you have only a few millions of adherents, and out of that number it would be very difficult to find two individuals with exactly the same belief, whilst the Catholic Church has

more than 260 millions of believers, all united in the same faith, all partaking of the same Communion. More than this : if you put together the hundreds of sects that are called Protestant, you will find that the Catholic Church outnumbers the sum total of their followers by more than 100 millions.

III.—THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

The Church is a family whose children are scattered over the face of the earth ; it is a society which absorbs all other societies, a kingdom of which there shall be no end, an army in battle array, marching to the conquest of eternity ; a flock whose sheep and lambs graze in the same pastures. Now, in every family there is a father, in every society a head, in every kingdom a ruler, in every army a General, in every flock a shepherd. Hence our reason tells us that Christ must of necessity have appointed a head to His Church. The Book of Revelation leaves no doubt on this point. St. Peter was chosen as the father of the Christian family, the head of the Christian society, the ruler of the kingdom of God, the leader of the army of Christ, the shepherd of His flock. And as the Church was destined to remain in existence till the end of time, the Headship, or Primacy, did not die with St. Peter, but persevered in his successors. In fact, all generations have acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope. All ages have proclaimed the Church of Rome the imperishable rock, the See which judges, and is not judged, the source of sacerdotal power, the mother of all Churches. All ages have proclaimed the Bishop of Rome the Holy Father, the

prefect of the house of God, the key-bearer of the kingdom of Heaven, the prince of Bishops, the shepherd of shepherds. It was the Pope that sent Patrick to Ireland, Palladius to Scotland, Augustine to England, Remigius to Gaul, Methodius to Russia, Boniface to Germany. It was the Pope that presided over all the canonical councils or general assizes of the whole Church; the Pope that took the defence of the weak and the oppressed against rulers and tyrants. And we may say that, after nineteen centuries, the Papacy is still the greatest power, and the most universally respected authority in the world. There is no man, whether he be King or Emperor, statesman or warrior, scientist or philosopher, that exercises so much influence on the destinies of individuals and nations as the Pope of Rome. This fact, so remarkable in this our age, has been witnessed by sixty generations of the past. The long line of the 260 Popes who have occupied the chair of St. Peter in the course of centuries constitutes one of the most wonderful facts in all history. Thirty-three of the Popes are honoured as martyrs, and seventy-nine are placed in the calendar of the Saints. In the discharge of their duty these men never yielded on a point of doctrine; they chose rather to die than to betray the sacred deposit entrusted to them: no subterfuge, no compromise, no ambiguous explanation. They trembled not in the presence of Kings and rulers. This unyielding firmness, together with the unbroken succession of centuries, is a great mystery for the unbeliever, and this mystery is all the more inexplicable in our age of anarchy and infidelity. Here is a

man—an old man—who claims to be the head of a society spread all over the world ; an old man who commands the obedience and guides the consciences of millions ; who addresses the savage in his forest, the barbarian in his tent, and the civilized man in the most enlightened cities ; an old man who exacts from his followers—even from the most enlightened minds—the most absolute submission ; an old man powerless and destitute, exposed to the hatred of his enemies and all the storms of human wickedness—this old man, like a magician, fascinates the world to such an extent that no power has ever been able to wrest the sceptre from his hand ; and at the mere sound of his voice hundreds of millions of human beings bow their heads in gentle obedience. Now, I say, the existence of such a man in this our age and in the centre of restless and volcanic Europe, is a wonder so great and so astounding that there is but one explanation for it—namely, the words of the Son of Man : “ Upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it ” (Matt. xvi. 18) ; “ I have prayed for thee [*Peter*] that thy faith fail not ” (Luke xxii. 32). As the prayer of Christ is sure to be heard, then the faith of Peter and of his successors cannot fail, and this privilege, which is called infallibility, is the secret of the Pope’s strength and power.

No point of Christian doctrine has been more violently assailed than the infallibility of the Pope, and yet no truth is more clearly expressed in the Scriptures. Our Lord declares that Peter is the foundation of an edifice against which the gates of

Hell and the storms of error shall never prevail. Surely such an edifice cannot rest on a tottering foundation. Our Lord promises to ratify in Heaven the decisions and decrees of Peter (Matt. xvi. 19). And surely He could not sanction and ratify error. Our Lord entrusted to Peter the care of feeding His flock (John xxi. 15, 17). And surely He could not make choice of a shepherd who would lead the flock into poisonous pastures. Besides, without infallibility there can be no unity, no authority, no faith, no religion.

Without infallibility there can be no unity. In order to convince ourselves of this great truth, we have but to consider the state of things outside the Catholic Church ; we have but to reflect on the religious anarchy which characterizes Protestantism on those multiplications, those divisions and subdivisions of sects, those quarrels, that confusion. The Anglican Establishment, which is the most perfect form of Protestantism, is described by the historian Macaulay as " a hundred sects battling within one Church " (Essay on Gladstone's " Church and State "). Whenever any difficulty is raised, the pastors are at a loss to solve it. From the momentous question of the eternity of Hell or the necessity of baptismal regeneration down to the colour of a church window, they do not know what to say. They have to consult their flocks, and whatever decision is taken, there is always an overwhelming opposition to it. Finally, the secular power has to interfere and dictate the sentence which universal suffrage may impose.

Without infallibility there can be no faith. Faith

is necessary to salvation. "He that believeth . . . shall be saved ; he that believeth not shall be condemned " (Mark xvi. 16). But faith requires certainty. It is not a mere persuasion, a mere opinion, or inclination to believe ; it is a firm, unshaken, immovable assent to truth, on the authority of God Himself. Now, without infallibility there is no certainty, and therefore no faith. Is it not a fact that the private judgment of Protestants has reduced the Bible to a bundle of contradictions ?

Without infallibility there is no religion. A religion without infallibility is like a house built on shifting sand : any storm may destroy it, any political or social earthquake may cause its ruin. What has become of the Arians, once so powerful ? Where are the Nestorians, the Eutychians ? A revolution has scattered and annihilated them. Men get weary of standing upon a shifting foundation : they want certainty and firmness, and if they do not find them, they either fly to the Church built on the rock or they drift into infidelity.

Some of our separated brethren betray a great ignorance concerning this question of the infallibility of the Pope. They think that it implies a kind of omnipotence which gives the Pope the right to do what he pleases. That is a wrong conception. The Pope has no more right than you or I to change the constitution of the Church or to alter the Book of Revelation. He is simply the official guardian and expounder of the Word of God, the custodian of our Christian rights and liberties. He could not allow Henry VIII. to put away his lawful wife, because he had no power to change the words,

“ What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder ” (Matt. xix. 6). Better far to lose a whole nation than to betray the deposit of faith. Infallibility means that the Pope speaks the truth when he imposes on the whole Church a decree concerning faith or morals. In a sense he is for the Christian Commonwealth what the Chief Justice or the highest tribunal in the land is for the nation. His decisions are final and without appeal, and, besides, they are the exact and faithful expression of truth. Our Protestant friends have never, perhaps, reflected that every government is *practically* infallible. Indeed, the voice of sovereignty is very different in London and Constantinople, in Paris and St. Petersburg, in Berlin and Peking ; but when that voice has once spoken, then the decree, the law, the bill, the edict, are alike final and irrevocable. Can we say that the most perfect of all societies—the society formed and fashioned by the Son of God—is the only one without authority, without sanction, without stability ?

IV.—THE CHRISTIAN CODE.

The revealed Word of God contained in tradition and Scripture constitutes the Christian code. If there is a certain fact, it is that Christ did not depute His Apostles to write, distribute, or sell Bibles : “ Going, therefore, teach ye all nations.” He appointed them witnesses and preachers. If there is another certain fact, it is that Christianity was not propagated nor established by the Bible. The first Gospel—that of St. Matthew—was not composed until eight years after Our Lord’s Ascen-

sion. Christ did not enjoin the writing of any part of the New Testament, far less the planning of a complete course of Christian doctrine. Nor did the disciples undertake this task. Their Epistles and other compositions were the outcome of circumstances, and not the result of a common understanding; they were intended to explain certain points not sufficiently clear and intelligible, or to arrange merely temporal matters. Hence the New Testament nowhere implies that it contains all the counsel of God. In fact, it prescribes no system of public worship; it does not give in full the rite for administering the sacraments; it does not mention the Canon of the Scriptures, the Descent of Our Lord into Limbo, the Baptism of infants, the sanctification of the Sunday, or its substitution for the Jewish Sabbath. But it alludes to many things in which the reader is supposed to have been already instructed (Heb. vi. 1, 2; 2 Thess. ii. 14; 2 Tim. i. 13, etc.). We are thus compelled to admit that, with the Scriptures, tradition constitutes the Christian Code, otherwise Christ would have left an incomplete system of faith to His Church.

With regard to the Bible or written Word of God, Our Lord would, indeed, have rendered us a very poor service if He had abandoned it to the free interpretation of every individual soul, and had not appointed a legitimate authority to expound its meaning and decide controversies concerning the sacred text. There is no book more difficult of understanding than the Bible. That Book, or, rather, that collection of Books, affects all ages, from the creation of the universe till the end of the world.

It was written in various languages and at different times and places. It contains all sorts of styles, and is full of metaphors, figures, expressions, that are unintelligible to the ordinary reader. The writers are, in turn, sages, poets, divines, prophets, Apostles, priests, and historians. Their maxims are replete with the deepest philosophy and the highest theology. They mention customs, laws, manners, practices, that have long since disappeared. They describe in the brightest colours the gorgeous magnificence of the Eastern Courts. They lament over the ruin of their country, or threaten with terrible calamities the transgressors of God's law. The prophets relate wonderful visions full of obscure mysteries, and concealed under impenetrable shades that are and will always remain hidden, even to the greatest minds. And this Book, or collection of Books, after having been translated hundreds of times in the course of ages, is presented to us in the modern garb of vernacular English, French, and German, and every loyal Protestant thinks that he has but to open it in order to understand its meaning! It is obvious that the intelligent reading and comprehension of the sacred text presupposes the knowledge of almost every branch of human learning—the knowledge of ancient languages, of philology and criticism, of poetry and rhetoric, philosophy and theology, archæology and history, geology and astronomy. St. Ambrose, one of the greatest lights of the Church, after having devoted his whole life to the study of the Scriptures, exclaims that they are a fathomless abyss, “an immense sea, having in themselves the most pro-

found senses and the most mysterious enigmas" ("Epist." 44, ad Constant); and Luther, in his usual mode of speech, declares that it would be perfect impudence for anyone to say that he understands even one book of the Scriptures ("Præfat. in Psalm."). St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, emphatically says that "no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation" (2 Pet. i. 21); and he adds that the Epistles of St. Paul in particular are full of profound mysteries, and contain "certain things hard to be understood which the unlearned and the unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Pet. iii. 16). The present state of Protestantism is a manifest evidence that the Bible is full of religious difficulties. With the sacred volume in their hands, Protestants are carried away by every wind of doctrine. They are like the "raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own confusion; wandering stars, to whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever" (Jude i. 13). It could not be otherwise. The inspired writings are the code of our Christian rights, but who ever heard of a society without a recognized authority to explain and enforce the code? Is every citizen free to explain the civil code as he likes, and to interpret it according to his own whims and caprices? If every man in the land were free to do so, what could you expect but disorder and confusion? Men are, indeed, wise enough to acknowledge that a supreme tribunal is absolutely necessary to settle controversies concerning the meaning of the law, and do they imagine that it never entered into the mind of God to do the

same in His Church, or did He prefer to leave it a prey to anarchy and schism? Will you say that there should be no controversies in the Church? But St. Paul expressly declares that there must be heresies (1 Cor. xi. 19). Or is human reason infallible, that it does not require a guide? Human reason is like the blind man who gropes in the dark, trying to feel his way along.

It is very strange that the Catholic Church should have to apologize to the world for teaching that God can, and does, communicate His truth to men by means of a tribunal free from error. He was strictly bound in justice to do so, and any religion that does not proclaim itself infallible cannot be a true religion, because it acknowledges that it can deceive and be deceived, and therefore that it is not from God. Our Lord is very explicit on this point. He insists on absolute, unreserved obedience to the lawful pastors. "He that heareth you, heareth Me; he that despiseth you, despiseth Me" (Luke x. 16). "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican" (Matt. xviii. 17). Christ then commands us to hear and obey the Church. Now, He could not do this if the Church could fall into error and lead us astray.

From all this it follows that the position of the Catholic Church is absolutely unassailable. In her alone are verified the words of the Master: "Upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 8).

CONCLUSION

THE FOLLY OF INFIDELITY

I.—THE PORTRAIT OF THE INFIDEL.

J. J. ROUSSEAU gives us a faithful picture of the infidel. He says: "I have consulted our philosophers, I have read their books and examined their opinions, and I have found them all proud, positive, and dogmatic, even in their pretended scepticism, knowing everything, proving nothing, and ridiculing each other. This last point is the only one in which they agree and are right. Bold and daring when they attack, they are quite powerless when they defend themselves. They have no arguments but for destruction. Where is the philosopher who, for the sake of his own glory, would not willingly deceive the whole human race? . . . Avoid those men who, under the pretence of explaining Nature, sow mischievous doctrines in the hearts of their fellows, and whose scepticism is far more affirmative and dogmatic than the decided tone of their adversaries. Under the arrogant pretext that they alone are enlightened, true, and sincere, they imperiously subject us to their peremptory decisions, and presume to give us, as the true principles of things, the unintelligible systems which they have erected in their own heads. Overthrowing, destroying, tramp-

ling underfoot all that is respected by men, they deprive the afflicted of the last consolation in their misery ; they take from the rich and the powerful the only curb on their passions ; they tear from the heart the remorse consequent on guilt, and the hope inspired by virtue ; and still they boast of being the benefactors of the human race. Truth, they say, is never hurtful to man. I think so, too, and this, in my opinion, is a strong proof that what they teach is not the truth " (Rousseau, as quoted by Gandolphy in his " Defence of the Ancient Faith ").

The infidel villifies and abuses everything dear to the heart of a Christian ; he makes the most sacred things the butt of his sarcasms and the subject of his gibes. If there is a question worthy of the consideration of man it is undoubtedly the question of our destiny here below and of our ultimate fate hereafter. Say what you will, our life is a warfare, and we meet with many trials and sorrows. Our first cry is a cry of pain, and our last groan is the rattle of death. Thrown upon this earth between two eternities, we naturally ask ourselves : " What is the scope and the end of life ? Why did God place me in this world ? What is my destiny ? What awaits me beyond the grave ? " The infidel sneers and laughs at those questions. He tears away from the sufferer the last refuge of his misery, the hope of a better world. He delights in wounding the feelings of millions, and he takes pleasure in amassing ruins. Despite his rhetorical show, he lacks freshness, originality, and depth. He simply varnishes and revamps the blasphemies of olden times. There is nothing new in his utterances,

except their flippancy and flummery. Like the robber who owns nothing himself, the infidel exhibits bits and samples stolen from others—from Celsus and Julian, from Voltaire and Bolingbroke. He gives a new coat of pigment to these mummies, imparting to them a fleeting semblance of life ; but the smell soon reveals the presence of the corpse. He claims for himself an absolute infallibility, and must be believed on his word as the teacher and saviour of mankind. He has a list of fixed and curt maxims, which he serves up to his readers as first principles that are absolutely unshaken and incontrovertible, or as settled dogmas that must not be touched. He says : “ Miracles are impossible. Revelation does not exist. God does not concern Himself about us. The world is eternal. There is no such place as Hell. Christ may be a great benefactor, but He is no God. The doctrines of Christianity are incompatible with reason. The Christian religion has had its day. Modern discoveries have superseded and ruined the old faith. The worship of God is a matter of taste and sentiment. Religion is good only for women.” The infidel vomits forth these reckless assertions without even attempting to prove them. He thinks he can cheat society at leisure and with impunity, as if humanity was made up of fools who are unable to investigate his statements. He has an unlimited faith in the ignorance of the low class for which he writes. He trusts in the gullibility of his readers, and sincerely believes that the world will swallow his teaching wholesale. When his bad faith is detected and his ignorant blundering exposed, instead of blushing for shame,

he stirs up the mud, and so tries to escape in the confusion. As a rule, he derides and blasphemes what he is utterly ignorant of. He knows nothing about our faith, our arguments, our proofs, or the credentials of our belief. If I ask him a question about revelation, the mystery of the Incarnation, the soul, the Church, he knows not what to say, and yet he poses as a philosopher, and flippantly delivers his *ex cathedra* judgment on all things under the sun. Unconscious ignorance is not sinful, and must be pitied ; but there is nothing so despicable as a man who, knowing his ignorance, will not hold his tongue. Some time ago a Voltairian unbeliever tried ineffectually to attract attention at a drawing-room party. He scoffed at religion, and seemed to be surprised that the only answer to his gibes was a sullen and ironical silence. Mortified and disappointed, he said to the lady of the house : " I am surprised that in such a bright and intellectual company I am the only one that does not believe in God." " You are not the only one," replied the lady ; " my spaniel enjoys the same privilege, only this poor brute has the good sense not to boast of it."

Too often, alas ! simple souls become the victims of infidelity, because the unbeliever knows how to deceive them. Like the Jews of old, who covered the shoulders of the Son of Man with purple rags, he puts a ridiculous cloak on religion. If he attacked it openly and straightforwardly, his fallacies would soon be detected ; but no, he forges new definitions and creates false notions of the Christian Faith, and then he fiercely rushes against this silly phantom of his own invention, and fights a shadow that has

no existence outside his own diseased brain. Apart from its emptiness, infidelity is the curse of our unfortunate age, and the souls which it has blighted are counted by millions. The words of Alfred de Musset may be well repeated here :

“ Dors—tu content, Voltaire et ton hideux sourire
Voltige—t’il encor sur tes os décharnés ?
Ton siècle était, dit-on, trop jeune pour te lire,
Le notre doit te plaire et tes hommes sont nés.”

Nowadays men have no time to think ; they are superficial, and unfit for profound reasonings. They are satisfied with what shines and amuses ; hence the great danger of infidelity. “ With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart ” (Jer. xii. 11). Besides, the infidel knows how to assume the appearance of honesty. In his better moments he attacks vice and praises virtue, and in so doing he is unconsciously influenced by that very religion which he blasphemes. Deny God and revelation, and what becomes of the moral law ? Where will you find the standard and criterion of what is good or evil ? What do you mean by virtue ? and what is meant by vice ? If man descends from the monkey, why should he be more virtuous than his ancestors ? Why should he curb his passions, and resist the animal instincts of his nature ? And if he be clever and rob his neighbour, why should he not enjoy the proceeds of his crime, and live happy all the days of his life ? Why should he not even enjoy the esteem of his fellow-men, and have a more pompous funeral than the victims of his cleverness ? Will our infidels answer these questions ? By their

insane theories they open the door to every excess and deify every passion, and yet they want to teach their fellows the rules of morality. "The style of these men is dry, their mode of expression devoid of sincerity, their imagination destitute of love and warmth; they have no unction, no richness, no simplicity. You find in their works nothing that satisfies; immensity is not there, because the Divinity is wanting" ("Genius of Christianity," part v., book iv., chap. v.). They have no respect for the glorious traditions of the past. They jeer and scoff at the faith of their fathers, the faith of the martyrs, the faith of the greatest minds and the purest souls the world ever produced. They cast doubts and suspicions on the most noble lives by hints and insinuations. "Who knows?" they say, and then they dot the line, leaving the sentence unfinished. I know nothing more cowardly or more contemptible than this. Infidels are in the moral, intellectual, and religious worlds what plague and pestilence, leprosy and insanity, are in physical nature.

II.—LOGIC OF THE INFIDEL.

In his "History of the Anglo-Saxon Church" St. Bede, the Venerable, records the following incident: When Paulinus brought the light of Faith to the Saxons, he soon convinced King Edwin of the truth of his teaching. The latter convoked the courtiers, the captains, the priests, and the principal lords of his kingdom, and explained to them the reasons which had prompted him to embrace the new Faith. When he had finished, an old chieftain stood up and said: "Perhaps, O King,

you will remember a thing which happens sometimes during the winter months, when you are seated at table with your captains and men-at-arms in a hall well lighted and heated, whilst there is hail and snow and storm outside. A little bird comes and swiftly crosses the hall, entering at one door, and going out at another. The short interval during this passage is full of sweetness. The little creature feels neither the cold nor the storm ; but this moment soon flits away. In the twinkling of an eye the bird is past and gone, and from winter it has returned to winter. Such, it seems to me, is the life of men upon earth ; its fleeting course is nothing compared with the time that precedes it or the time that follows. The eternity of the past and that of the future are full of darkness and uncertainty. If the new doctrine can teach us something certain about them, it deserves our consideration and respect."

This rude warrior evinced good sense and sound logic. The problems of eternity are not subjects for abusive language ; they deserve our serious and earnest attention. The infidel either doubts or denies religion ; in both cases he is illogical. If he doubts, how is it that he does not make any effort to shake off his darkness, but chooses to remain in his terrible uncertainty ? How it is that he leaves all to chance ? He loves his folly, and lives as if there was no reward for the just, nor punishment for the wicked. He goes with his eyes blindfolded to the house of his eternity. Without preparation and concern, he passes through the darksome doors of death, and falls into the hands of his judge. If any man should follow a similar course in the ordinary routine of life, if instead of

protecting his honour or his goods when they were threatened he felt no solicitude about them, but rather prided himself on being unconcerned and indifferent, what would you think of him? You would say that he had lost his reason. And yet that man would undoubtedly be far more reasonable than the infidel, who recklessly exposes himself to the most dreadful of all calamities, who risks his soul and his eternity. A sensible man, a man of ordinary prudence, who has serious doubts about some future venture, always chooses the safest course. The unbeliever neglects to do so; he sneers and jests at the danger. At times, however, he seems to realize his inconsistency, and in order to strengthen his position, he plucks up courage, and pretends to have no doubts whatever concerning the absolute and infallible certainty of his doctrines; and this is the other stage of his mental disorder far more difficult of cure than the first, because it proceeds from greater pride. What man of good sense can be sincere when he pretends to be sure and certain that his destiny is the same as that of the beast; that the Christian religion is a fiction, an imposture, a fraud, and that the Gospel has no claim on the human mind? Whence comes this conviction? Is it the result of investigation and study? No, a thousand times no. Christianity is not one of those paltry and abortive systems which swell and burst like a soap-bubble; it is the mightiest institution the world has ever known; it has so far an existence of twenty centuries, and its hold on our humanity is so strong that, but for it, the race would soon wither away and die. It has always counted in its ranks

the highest representatives of human erudition and learning, and its proofs are so powerful that they are unanswerable, so irresistible that they force the conviction of all men of good-will. The sublimity of its doctrines is not, and cannot be, disputed. Its morality is absolutely perfect ; it regulates not only the exterior actions of men, but also the thoughts of the mind, the desires of the will, the feeling of the heart. How can the unbeliever, in his arrogant stupidity, declare, pronounce, and define that all this is falsehood and sham ? And what has he to give in exchange for the Christian faith ? Nothing but negations and bold hypotheses, all full of wind, which the least prick empties. He changes his principles at each return of the moon, and is, in succession, atheist, agnostic, deist. Like the marine god of ancient Greece, Proteus, the son of Tethys, he has the faculty of assuming different shapes and forms. As a sophist he is volatile and frivolous ; as a romancer he is obscene ; and as a historian he betrays the truth, according to the precept of his master : “ *Mentez, mentez, il en restera toujours quelque chose !* ” (Voltaire). He styles himself the enemy of superstition, and yet, not unfrequently, he is the most superstitious of men. He wears trinkets of gold and silver, amulets, charms, talismans, lucky rings, to which he attaches a preternatural power, and he indulges in practices, occult as well as public, which are simply ridiculous. Auguste Nicolas tells us of a man renowned for his incredulity and atheism who always made the sign of the cross on his clothes whilst dressing himself in the morning, because he was afraid of a sudden death.

“ The modern infidel that sneers at the miracles of the Bible,” says an American writer, “ sees nothing absurd in the ghosts of Hamlet, Macbeth, Richard III., and Julius Cæsar. He delights in fictitious miracles, because his mental tendency is towards sham, just as his infidelity is a sham, and because the heart must seek the supernatural in sham if it rejects it in reality ” (O’Malley, “ Thoughts of a Recluse ”).

But it is especially at the hour of death that the inconsistency of the infidel reveals itself. Death is the test of sincerity and truth. Now it has never been heard of, in the course of twenty centuries, that a good and well-instructed Christian man ever became an infidel on his death-bed, whilst there are innumerable facts showing that thousands of unbelievers have abjured their monstrous errors at that supreme moment, when truth, and truth alone, could prompt them to take such a step. On the verge of eternity, and on the point of falling into the hands of the Judge whom they have blasphemed, they take refuge in the arms of that religion which consoled and encouraged them in the days of their innocence. The leaders of infidelity in France at the present time are often known to ask for a priest at the hour of death. Their predecessors did the same. It is well known that Montesquieu, Buffon, La Harpe, Moreau, Maine de Biran, received the last rites of the Church. As for Voltaire and d’Alembert, they also asked for a priest, but their friends did not allow him to approach them. What can be the worth and value of such men’s words and testimony ? What can their authority prove ? During life they blaspheme God, they calumniate

and abuse religion, but when brought face to face with death, they disown and repudiate their folly, crawling and craving for mercy. Quite recently a Senator of the French Legislature, called Caze, died after having been reconciled to the Church. He had voted all the sectarian measures of persecution. He was one of those men who made it a practice and a creed to expel the priest from the bed of the sick and the dying in the hospitals, in the army, and in the navy. And lo ! when he himself felt the approach of death, he sent for a priest, and received the last absolution of that Church which he had despised and persecuted during life ; he heard those words of hope and pardon which he had helped to rob so many immortal souls of during his legislative career.

I can never think without deep emotion of the last days of Hégésippe Moreau, a French poet of great repute, who had consecrated his genius and his life to the cause of infidelity and irreligion. One evening he was strolling along the streets and boulevards of Paris, and entering a church, where, as a boy, he had served at the altar, he gave himself over to deep thought. In review he passed over the happy days of his childhood and the scenes of his youth. He remembered the joys of his first Communion, and the peace that followed his frequent confessions. Then visions of sorrow, and sin, and doubt, passed before his mind. He had listened to the false prophets and Doctors of the times. They had robbed him of his Faith, the Faith of his mother, and had given him nothing but cheerless despair. And there he was in the grand old church again ! The familiar Saints were still in

their places, the stations of the Cross, the confessionals, the Communion rails, the altar, the lamp burning before the tabernacle—nothing was changed. But what a change had come over himself ! His very soul was blighted, oppressed, seared ! Moreau prayed, but his prayer was that of the hopeless. “ My God,” he said, “ if there be a God, for pity’s sake, make me believe !” Later on he was on his death-bed. There, in the presence of that eternity which was opening before him, at the sight of that life that had been so short, and yet so full of sorrows, at the thought of that God Who was so soon to judge him, he recovered the Faith of his childhood ! A priest came and absolved him in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and he died in the sentiments of the most lively hope, his heart brimming over with a happiness that will never have an end.

III.—ETHICS OF INFIDELITY.

Infidelity is not so much an error of the mind as it is a sin of the heart. You will never hear a truly virtuous man despise or disparage religion. Experience has taught me that as long as a man fulfils the duties imposed on him by his Christian Faith, as long as he is honest, pure, and humble, he believes ; but the moment he plunges into the mire of vice, then he begins to doubt, and gradually becomes an unbeliever, and so justifies the words of the Scriptures : “ The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God ” (Ps. xiv. 1). It is an historical fact that the most corrupted ages are the most fruitful in infidels ; witness our own age, and the age of Voltaire. Hence infidelity is evidently the

child of libertinism. Man feels the need of justifying his excesses by pretexts and excuses, but when corruption and shame have spread like a torrent, iniquity then assumes the form of a system. The old pagans justified their abominations by the example of their gods. Modern infidels justify theirs by denying there is a God at all. Who will contradict me when I say that the fathers of infidelity were all notorious for their licentious lives? What man of sense will say these men were led to unbelief by their love of virtue and truth? Who ever heard of a good Christian abandoning his sacred Faith, and becoming an infidel to amend his life? There are, on the contrary, thousands of instances showing that unbelievers have turned their backs against their impious doctrines in order to be honest and virtuous. Men become infidels through the desire of stifling their conscience. They hate God, and deny His existence for no other reason than that He is the avenger of crime. There are people who wonder at the hatred of the Jews, and of the world, for the gentle Jesus, the great friend of the poor and the oppressed, the restorer of human dignity, the benefactor of the race. The hatred of which He is the object is truly diabolic. It is fierce and unrelenting; it has a character of fixity and fury which is appalling. And what is the cause? There is only one explanation: He is hated because He is the Son of God! If the infidel is convinced that Christianity is but a relic of past ignorance and superstition, why does he not leave it alone? Why strike at a phantom that has no reality? Why so much noise about nothing?

Why these shameful discourses, that insensate rage, these secret societies, these terrible oaths? The infidel says: "Christianity is an error; it must be destroyed." Let us suppose that it is an error. But there are so many other errors in the world much more conspicuous, manifest, and abominable, and no one thinks of crushing them. Christianity is an error! If so, it is very inoffensive, it does not harm anyone, whilst it is a powerful means of doing good, a great incentive to virtue, and a source of ineffable consolation in the midst of the sufferings and trials of life. There can be no doubt about what we say: "God is hated because He is the avenger of iniquity. I deny that good faith is possible here. Infidelity therefore is a crime, but a crime of a special malice, a sin against the Holy Ghost. When a believer yields to his passions, it is, as a rule, through frailty, surprise, or the violence of the temptation, but behind his sin there is remorse, shame, and fear of God. The infidel, on the contrary, suppresses God in order to have it all his own way. His offence is a direct revolt against his Maker. He says to his victims: "You are afraid of God, and for that reason you do not follow your inclinations. God does not exist, or, if He exists, He is not the God of the Christians. What they call virtue is a fiction, what they call duty, a mere name. Crown yourselves with roses, and shake off the bands of infancy." There is no doubt that infidelity has wrecked many noble souls. This is so true that unbelievers themselves in their better moments are ashamed of their folly, and are careful to screen and protect their dear ones against the consequences of

their wild revelries. The philosopher Diderot, one of the most impious men of his age, was one day found by a friend teaching the Catechism to his daughter. "What!" said the friend, "you are teaching the Catechism!" "Ah!" replied Diderot, "religion alone can make my child a good girl and a devoted woman." Another infidel was one day called to the bedside of his daughter, who was dying. She turned to him, and said: "Father, your lessons and doctrines have made me unhappy all the days of my life. Do not deceive me at the hour of my death. Tell me seriously if I am to believe the creed of my mother, or must I accept what you have so often told me: that there is no Heaven, no Hell, no immortality?" The father was thunderstruck, and answered with tears in his eyes: "My child, believe the creed of your mother." Then, turning to one of his friends, he exclaimed: "Miserable that we are to stifle in those tender hearts the flames of hope and happiness!"

Infidelity encourages licence and crime, and tends to the destruction of society. What a relief for worldlings and high livers to hear that the pure morality of the Gospel is an idle fancy, that remorse is a weakness, that enjoyment and pleasure are the ultimate end of our creation! How gratifying this doctrine must be to the unfaithful spouses, the robbers and extortioners, the effeminate, the proud, the perjurers, the blasphemers! It is a fact of experience that crime spreads in the same proportion as infidelity. In this age of unbelief, the public tribunals are besieged with cases of the most revolting nature, the daily Press is replete with scandals, and all sorts of infamies display their

horrors in the open light of day. How often does it not happen that criminals of the worst class, when brought before their judges, are heard to say that they acted conformably to their principles? The effect of this strange morality on society at large is dreadful. Infidelity incites the man of toil to take his share of happiness in this world at the expense of the rich; it teaches the ignorant crowd that the power to rule and command does not come from God, and that Kings and magistrates are robbers of authority. Hence thrones totter and fall, sceptres are broken, anarchy and revolt are the order of the day.

IV.—“NON EST PAX IMPIIS.”

“There is no peace to the wicked” (Isa. xlviii. 22). By renouncing and sacrificing the next life the infidel does not find happiness, nor improve his condition in this world. There is no peace for him. He wishes to live without God, and God abandons him to his wretched lot. When I was still young, a book entitled “*Le Doute et ses Victimes*” fell into my hands. I devoured its contents with great avidity, and the impression produced on my mind was so strong that it has never been effaced. In fact, I do not think that any other book has had such a salutary influence on my mind. The brilliant writer, Monsignor Baunard, describes vividly the sufferings—I should say, the agonies, the pangs, and throes—of beautiful but unfortunate souls infected by the poison of doubt. It seemed to me at the time that the book had been written with tears of blood. It describes admirably the mournful tale and the sad history of an evil that has blighted

millions of lives, and which is undoubtedly the greatest curse of our times. From these doleful pages, and from other experiences, it is manifest that the unbeliever is the most unhappy, the most miserable, of men.

No one can doubt that the life of man upon earth is a warfare. There are, and there will always be, widows and orphans ; there are, and there will always be, misfortunes and calamities, wars and pestilences, disappointments and reverses, betrayals and treacheries, infirmities and sicknesses. What becomes of the infidel when death deprives him of his dear ones, when humiliation crushes him, when he is forsaken by his friends, when persecution and disgrace assail him, when malady and old age hurry him to the grave ? In all these trying circumstances he falls into despair and curses his destiny. The Christian, on the contrary, considers the present life as a time of trial, a passage through a hostile country ; his true home is in Heaven. He knows " that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come " (Rom. viii. 18). And he is happy to purchase the crown of immortality by a few moments of tribulation and sorrow. When his heart is broken he unites his sufferings to those of his God, and remembers that the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and that the violent alone bear it away. When all his energies are ebbing away he still finds strength enough to praise and glorify his Maker. If death strikes those around him, and takes away a dear child, a beloved wife, or a friend, he says : " Farewell, but only for a while ; we shall soon meet again." During his exile at

St. Helena, Napoleon was one day walking by the sea-shore, when the little daughter of General Bertrand came to salute him. "My child," he said, "you must learn your religion. Without religion there is no happiness. Come to me, and I will teach you the Catechism." And during two years the great conqueror became the instructor of this innocent child.

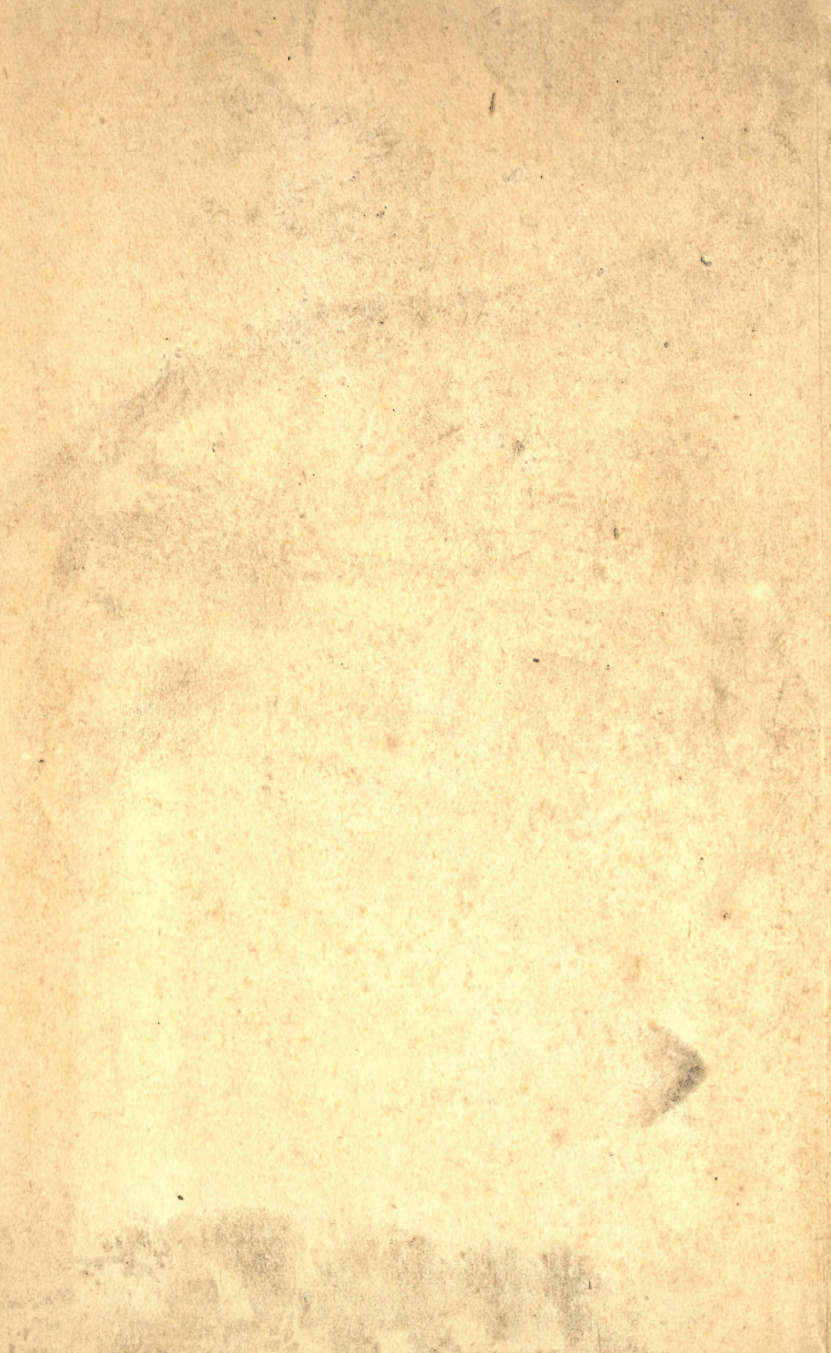
Even if the infidel should find a kind of deceptive and ephemeral happiness in the enjoyment of pleasure, riches, and power, this momentary intoxication could not fill the immense capacity of his soul. The human soul is a restless exile ; it has aspirations and cravings that are infinite, and which religion alone can satisfy. Willing or unwilling to acknowledge it, we were created for the infinite. The infinite surrounds us on all sides ; we see it above us, we see it before us, we see it behind us, and we feel it within us. The infidel, in his folly, wants to cut himself off from the infinite, but he cannot. He compels his soul, that daughter of Heaven, to crawl upon the dust of this world ; he tears it away from its centre of attraction, and gives it only trifles and toys to forget its immortal destiny. The beautiful harmony of the universe, and the wondrous scenes of Nature, do not, and cannot, speak to his heart. For the Christian, the entire creation has a soul ; it is a masterpiece which reveals the perfections of its Author, His power, His goodness, His beauty, His providence. The infidel, on the contrary, is a stranger to these glorious works of God. They are nothing to him but the result of chance. He cannot discern the Intelligence which presides over their immense harmony. He can find neither

interest nor charm in the company of his fellow-men, because an impassable barrier separates him from them. The believer looks upon the members of the human family as brothers and sisters whose common Father is in Heaven ; he considers them as immortal beings destined to share with him an unending happiness, and he understands the Divine law which binds him to love his neighbour as himself. But the infidel can only be guided by selfishness and egoism in his dealings with other men. For him man is but a plant, which grows and dies, an animal which feels pleasure or pain, and is soon reduced to rottenness and dust. " Look at the corpse interred in yonder grave, that statue of nothing wrapt in a winding sheet. There is man, according to the atheist ! Inferior to the animals in point of instinct ; dust like them, he returns as they do to dust, and looks forward to no other end but a sepulchre and worms " (Chateaubriand). What union, what brotherhood, can there be between persons who do not look beyond the grave, who acknowledge no other law but the law of interest and pleasure ? In the lives and writings of infidels we see nothing but misanthropy and spleen, contempt of the race, want of feeling, and want of heart. " The family," says Michelet, " is the asylum where we all wish to rest our hearts after so many useless efforts, and so many lost illusions. We return to it fatigued and depressed. But do we find rest there ? Of what can we speak to our mothers, our wives, our daughters ? Only of indifferent topics, such as business and the news of the day ; you cannot mention subjects which refer to the heart, the moral

life, religion, the soul, God. If you attempt to speak of those things at table, at the family hearth, during the evening meal, your mother shakes her head, your wife contradicts, your daughter disapproves by her silence. They sit at one end of the table, you sit at the other " ("Le Doute et ses Victimes," Introduction). There is thus in the home a continual element of uneasiness and discord. The infidel sometimes uses the weapon of blasphemy and ridicule ; he inflicts torture and agony on those whose affections he should hold dear, and hence, when trials come, there is no common refuge, no common support ; all retire within themselves, and a profound sadness clouds those lives that are bound together by the common ties of nature, but are separated by the insuperable abyss of irreligion. In the face of these facts, many look on the future with melancholy feelings, and repeat the doleful forebodings of the poet :

"Cavete posteri, vestra res agitur."

The future is, indeed, in the hands of God, but we do not think that God will abdicate His rights to suit infidelity ! Christianity is not a human creation ; it is a Divine institution. The Church built on the rock cannot perish. The gates of Hell will never prevail against it. It is well for us to remember this, because it is a help to faith. The words of the "Son of Man" must, and will be, fulfilled : "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20).



Washington of Mr. Prescott and his associates." Special to The Journal.

Dynamiter Is Convicted.

MONROE, Mich., Feb. 28.—A circuit court jury Wednesday afternoon convicted Nat Davies, Ida township farmer, of having in his possession a stick of dynamite, with intent to destroy the life of his wife and the home. The dynamite exploded on the highway, about 150 feet from the home, July 22, 1917.

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The Son of Man.

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